

Mapping Syrian Refugee Border Crossings:  
A critical, feminist perspective

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Master of Arts.

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## Abstract

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calls the ongoing Syrian conflict “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era.” Since 2011, violence has led to nearly 220,000 lives lost, 6.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced, and over 4 million have fled across borders into Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt. Western media have documented Syrian border crossings and stories through riveting journalism, interviews, photography, and maps. While the written and photographic reporting of Syrian stories uses captivating imagery and testimonials to convey the traumatic experiences of individuals, the expression of these experiences in the accompanying cartographic coverage is limited. Western media cartographic practices commonly aggregate refugees into flow lines and proportional symbols and simplify border experiences into homogenous black lines. These and other mapping conventions *silence* the experiences of individual Syrians, and negate the emotions, perils, and geopolitical issues inherent to border crossing experiences, while ignoring the multitude of non-traditional borders that refugees encounter in addition to the international border. I ask the following research question: **How can the cartographic portrayal of Syrian peoples’ border crossings be improved to better represent their experiences?** Through a critical feminist lens, I analyzed contemporary cartographic methods in 86 maps published by Western sources, interviewed seven humanitarian workers, and developed an alternative mapping technique that more accurately reflects Syrian border crossings. By rendering Syrian border stories and experiences visible with cartography, my work enhances interaction between critical cartography, border studies, and critical, feminist perspectives and gives Syrians a geographic voice as yet unavailable to them through conventional cartographies.

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## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

### Introduction

Since March of 2011, Syria has faced civil unrest leading to what the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) calls “the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era” (UNHCR, 2014). Peaceful protests began in early 2011 after a group of teenagers were detained and tortured for painting revolutionary propaganda publically in the city of Dar’a. The situation quickly escalated with violent backlash from the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad (BBC, 2014).

The backlash committed by the Assad government has preempted a Syrian civil war between the minority group and ruling class, the Alawites, and the majority group of Sunni Muslims in combination with ethnic and religious minorities such as the Syrian Kurds and Christians. The civil war has escalated with divided international support as human rights have been violated by the Assad government, as well as by rebel groups (BBC, 2014). Violence has led to over 202,000 lives lost so far (Aljazeera, 2015).

As a result, millions of Syrians have fled their homes. UNHCR reports that roughly 6.5 million Syrians have been internally displaced and over 4 million Syrians have fled the country to neighboring countries: Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2015). A UNHCR report from August 2014 documents 100,000 Syrians crossing international borders every month. These numbers, however, only document registered refugees. The number of Syrians abroad is expected to be much higher. Women and children make up roughly three quarters of Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2014).

As violence ensues and the migration of Syrian refugees continues to trend upward, borders become extremely important. Crossing international borders and seeking refugee status grants protection and assistance from the host country such as Jordan and international support from the United Nations (UN) and other humanitarian aid organizations. At the 1951 Refugee Convention, the UN defined a refugee as a person who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 2014). Syrian experiences fit this profile.

As such, leaving Syria and crossing borders in hopes of international protection and support is the only option for many Syrians. Even though the trek to the border is dangerous and expensive, relocating to a foreign country and registering as a refugee often outweighs the costs that would be paid had they remained within Syria (UNHCR, 2014). Whether crossing legally or illegally, the stories of border crossings vary from person to person.

Syrians fleeing the country also cross or encounter many non-traditional borders. The first border crossed for some is often leaving the home. Leaving one’s belongings, home, and livelihood is a difficult border to cross. Violence and unrest, however, drives this border crossing. Other such borders include but are not limited to money, education, and socioeconomic status, each of which can be restraining or liberating. Women face particular non-traditional, socio-spatial borders. For example, traveling without being accompanied by a male relative has a stigma and gendered border attached to it, and many women are confronted by infractions against personal, embodied borders when they are subject to gender-based violence.

Once refuge is sought, hardship and survival is not left at the border. The demands placed on host communities by the rapid influx of Syrian refugees have created tense relationships with locals. Acceptance within host communities varies as jobs, resources, healthcare, education, and housing are in short supply. These conditions after leaving Syria highlight additional non-traditional border crossings that are frequently not recognized.

## Research questions

In this project, I ask the following research question: **How can the cartographic portrayal of Syrian peoples' border crossings be improved to better represent their experiences?**

To answer this question, I begin with two sub-questions: **How are Syrian refugees' experiences of crossing borders conveyed in maps for Western audiences** and **What have been Syrian refugees' experiences of traditional and non-traditional borders during the 2011-2015 crisis?** These two sub-questions delve into Syrian stories of borders and border crossings and Western media's portrayal of those stories, with a focus on maps. First, I analyze 86 maps published by nine Western sources and document the cartographic techniques used by contemporary media to depict the Syrian crisis. Second, I draw on seven interviews with humanitarian workers and displaced Syrians as well as five published stories to guide my understanding of borders, Syrian border crossings, and the complexities of fleeing during the current conflict. I aim to identify *all* border crossings and understand the realities of Syrian experiences, and the extent to which these realities are cartographically conveyed to a Western audience.

Next, I use a critical, feminist lens to guide an analysis and cartographic visualization of Syrian experiences and border crossings, asking: **What can a critical, feminist analysis reveal**

**about Syrian refugee experiences crossing borders and their portrayal in Western media, and how can critical, feminist cartography contribute a more accurate representation of those experiences in new maps?**

I guide my analysis, critique, and re-mapping with relevant literature in the fields of critical and feminist geography, feminist and geographic methodologies, border studies, and story mapping. With these tools, I map the stories of border crossings presented in my seven interviews.

## Discussion

Western media outlets have documented the international border crossings through riveting journalism and photography. One such story involves a young boy who was separated from his family during the long walk to the border and confusion amongst the masses (Figure 1). He was later united with his family in Jordan (Solve Peace, 2014). An image posted by the *Atlantic* depicts a steady stream of peoples carrying their livelihoods to what is thought to be temporary refuge in Jordan's Zaatari refugee camp (Figure 2). A third image shows two men carrying children while running across the dilapidated border bound by barbed wire (Figure 3). In addition to such photographs, Western media has highlighted the flux of Syrian border crossings through aggregated reports and individual testimonials that bring traumatic experiences of forced migration into reality.

Western media has also indirectly documented non-traditional borders and non-traditional border crossings. Using interviews and photography, the UNHCR report titled *Woman Alone* documents Syrian women's experiences of isolation, gender-based violence, fear and anxiety, and new roles within the home and community. While thorough in many respects, the



UNHCR report does not directly recognize these experiences as interactions with non-traditional borders (UNHCR, 2014).

Western media frequently uses maps to provide context to these Syrian stories. While the written and photographic reporting of Syrian stories uses captivating imagery and testimonials to convey the traumatic experiences of individuals, the accompanying cartographic coverage is comparatively emotionless. Many of the maps used by Western media aggregate the four million refugees into choropleth and proportional symbol maps where the individual and experiences are lost (Figures 4 and 5). Personalized maps of individuals, as seen in Kevin Sullivan's *Washington Post* article, neglect the uniqueness of a subjective experience (Figures 6-8). For example, Sullivan's maps use identical cartographic conventions such as a grey base map with red symbolization, identical fonts, and a simple flow line designating a route. The flow lines in Figures 6-8 appear fluid and unburdened, which negate emotions, dangerous perils, and legality issues linked to border crossings. These maps are intended to orient the reader with respect to the location of the city and the border, providing context to accompanying coverage (example, text and images). Yet a need remains for maps that more accurately portray borders and border crossings, both traditional and non-traditional.

My discourse and content analysis in Chapter 4 document the content, techniques, and cartographic portrayal of Syrian refugees in 86 maps produced by *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*, *National Geographic Magazine*, *Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU)*, *MapAction*, *Syria Tracker*, and *Syria Deeply*. I use a critical, feminist lens to analyze these maps in relationship to the realities faced by Syrians and relevant literature investigating the dimensions of traditional and non-traditional borders, critical, feminist perspectives, and story

mapping. With interviews and secondary source stories, I identify borders and border experiences and translate my critical, feminist analysis into visual variables in a new cartographic technique. With this cartographic technique, I create new maps with my interview stories to contribute to the more accurate representation of Syrian border crossing experiences.



Figure 1: An untitled photograph of a Syrian boy crossing the border alone. [Photograph]. Harper, A. (2014). *Solve Peace*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.solvepeace.org/2014/03/26/refugees-around-the-world-syrian-refugees-in-jordan/>



Figure 2: Syrian refugees crossing into Iraq at the Peshkabour border point. [Photo]. Mizban, H. (2014). *The Atlantic*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2013/09/six-million-displaced-by-war-in-syria/100587/#img10>



Figure 3: Syrians jump over barbed wire as they flee to Turkey. [Photo]. (2014). *The Atlantic*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2013/09/six-million-displaced-by-war-in-syria/100587/#img10>

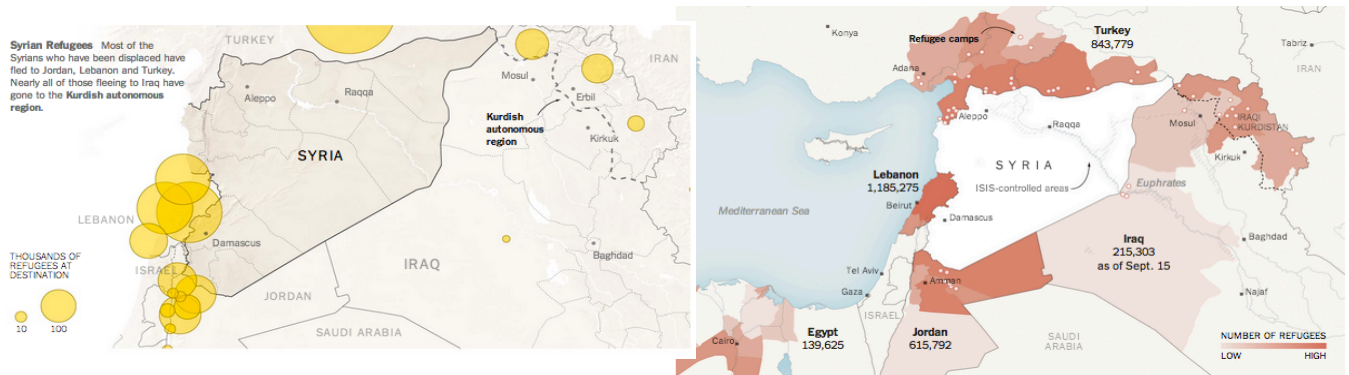


Figure 4: A proportional symbol map of displaced Syrians. [Map]. (2014). *The New York Times*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/29/world/middleeast/a-reignited-war-drives-iraqis-out-in-huge-numbers.html>

Figure 5: A choropleth map depicting Syrian refugee dislocation. [Map]. (2014). *The New York Times*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/25/world/middleeast/syria-isis.html>



Figure 6: Mouneer Khalthoum's journey from Syria to Turkey. [Map]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/02/stitching-a-life/>

Figure 7: Khalid al Saawdeh's journey from Syria to Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. [Map]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/02/born-into-exile/>

Figure 8: Dania Amroosh's journey from Syria to a hospital in Turkey. [Map]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/03/refuge-stories-from-the-syrian-exodus/>

## Positionality statement

Throughout the research process, my own positionality as a woman, an academic researcher, and an American outsider living in the United States played a significant role in completing this thesis. I fully recognize that my positionality has changed throughout this process and the project itself changed given my positionality. Here, I explain my position, my biases, my assumptions, and my subjectivities that influence my research outcomes.

*I am an outsider.* I was cautious to begin this project because I wanted to interview Syrian refugees and hear their stories, diving into recent traumatic events and personal stories that I assumed many would be reluctant to share. I worried that my position as a white, female, American researcher based in the United States would prevent the building of mutual trust with interviewees. How could I build trust during an hour-long Skype or phone interview? I recognize that my identity and lack of experience in the region may have changed the responses of participants.

*I do not speak Arabic.* Language is a huge border as it aids or limits clear communication. Common language fosters comfort, trust, and openness. In contrast, language barriers also create an unintentional power dynamic, which may limit participant honesty and accuracy of information. All of my interviewees spoke English, however, English was a second language for four of them. During the interview and the transcription process, some information was missed for lack of understanding. I fully recognize the potential problems language played in my interpretation of their stories, and in the future, I would consider mitigating this issue with a translator.

*I am not a Muslim woman.* Cultural differences between my interviewees and myself also pose as another border preventing full disclosure of information. I am not Muslim and as a

woman, I do not wear a hijab to cover my hair. I did not want to offend participants based on cultural distinctions in my appearance. I also understood that participants might also feel uncomfortable talking to me based on of our cultural differences. To combat these social differences, I asked participants to choose the level of communication that he or she felt most comfortable using, whether that be video, audio, or writing. Although not perfect, this methodological technique helped relieve cultural anxiety on both ends.

*I collaborated.* Collaboration with a local NGO and a colleague working in Zaatari refugee camp helped ease some of this underlying tension and the shortcomings of my limited perspective. I was able to troubleshoot, practice my interview questions, and ask for advice from my collaborators. They also put me in contact with personal friends that would be open and willing to talk about their situations. My collaboration with both groups unintentionally altered my interviewee pool from solely Syrian refugees to include humanitarian workers and activists. Although only three interviewees are of Syrian descent, this proved to be a valuable change in my project. It enabled me to collect personal stories along with contextual stories, which provided a well-rounded and broader perspective of Syrian border crossings.

*I am interested and prepared.* I think my genuine interest in the Syrian conflict and empathy for those affected by the situation helped build trust with participants. Preparedness demonstrated my understanding and background—limited as it may be—of the conflict, the history of the area, and geopolitical issues within. My preparedness stems from my undergraduate work that regionally focused on the Middle East as well as a study abroad trip to Turkey. This background gave me a foundation in the region and regional customs to allow me to speak intelligently on the subject. My graduate work and extensive literature review on qualitative methodologies and feminist theoretical frames also helped prepare me for my

interviews. Feminist theory, particularly Chandra Mohanty (2003 and 2013), forced me to critically examine my role as a researcher to avoid universalistic and ‘colonial’ approaches while engaging with participants.

*Last, I am trained in Western cartographic traditions.* In this thesis, I analyze and critique maps produced by Western media. I fully recognize that I do not engage with the cartographers and graphic designers and their intents behind these maps. Furthermore, my critique may be out of scope considering the initial purpose of the map. As a trained Western cartographer, I also use many of the conventional techniques that I critique in later chapters. With that, I stress that my work does not replace traditional cartographic practice, but explores and offers an alternative approach to mapping. Is my solution perfect? No, of course not. It does, however, nudge critical cartography and border symbolization forward by questioning our common mapping practices.

## CHAPTER 2: Background

### Syrian Refugee Crisis, 2011-present

The Assad family has ruled Syria since 1971. Although the current President Bashar al-Assad incited hope for democratic reform when he took office in 2000, the one-party system has been highly criticized internationally for its emergency rule of law, socioeconomic inequality, discrimination of ethnic minorities and women, and restriction of civil liberties. Dissatisfaction with the reigning government has led to ongoing civil unrest since March of 2011 (BBC, 2014).

While fitting into the broader context of Arab Uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, Syrians faced circumstances that were unique within Syria's borders during the reign of the Assad family. Prior to March 2011, Syrian protests were non-existent due to the Assad regime's emergency rule of law that banned any public organization by more than five citizens and effectively gave the government power to arrest and detain civilians with unclear cause. In addition to emergency rule of law, Syrians faced socioeconomic inequality with a widening gap between the Alawite ruling, minority class and Sunni majority class. Last, drought, unemployment, rising prices for basic needs, and discrimination against Kurds and women set the stage for protest and revolution (BBC, 2014).

The tipping point began in early 2011 after a group of dissident teenagers were arrested in the city of Dar'a. As protests and counteraction from the Assad regime intensified, rebel groups such as the Free Syrian Army along with right-wing Islamic extremists organized military action in response. By March of 2012, violence in Homs and Dar'a led to the initial waves of the Syrian refugee exodus. Violence continued throughout 2012 as rebels groups gained control in Damascus and Aleppo prompting more Syrians to flee. The peak of Syrian departure occurred in March of 2013 as government forces recovered control on the ground with the help of Lebanese



Hezbollah and Iraqi Shia militias. During this time, the Assad regime used chemical weapons in its military action. During the next three months, Homs and Aleppo saw upwards of 75,000 Syrians flee. BBC News writes, “the daily flow of men, women, and children has become one of the largest forced migrations since World War II” (BBC, 2014). The exodus of Syrians throughout the region continues today.

As over four million refugees spill across Syrian borders into Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanon, another 6.5 million Syrians remain in limbo, often reluctant or without resources to leave their homes and belongings amidst the violence. With continued violence concentrated in urban areas such as Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus, nearly 100,000 Syrians make the difficult decision to flee every month. According to a UNHCR statement “almost half of all Syrians have now been forced to abandon their homes and flee for their lives. One Syrian in every eight has fled across the borders” (2014).

Accommodations for the increasing numbers of Syrian refugees are provided in urban settings, informal settlements, and formal refugee camps. In urban settings, 38 percent of the Syrian population lives in sub-standard housing due to depletion of their finances during the conflict and escape. Only twelve percent of Syrians are housed in formal refugee camps. Jordan hosts three such camps, the largest of which is Zaatari, located within fifteen miles of the border and hosting roughly 100,000 Syrians. Though this number is a small proportion of the approximately 800,000 Syrians in Jordan, it is the third largest city in Jordan. The remaining refugees have relocated to host communities (UNHCR, 2014).

While Syria remains in a state of escalating conflict, host countries are now facing repercussions with the influx of refugees in cities and camps. Lebanon, for example, has a population of roughly 5 million and currently hosts over 1.1 million Syrian refugees, a

population increase greater than twenty percent. These dramatic increases place higher demands on jobs, housing, infrastructure, and basic needs such as food, water, and healthcare (UNHCR, 2014).

International organizations and aid groups such as UNHCR, ACTED, and REACH have been called in to assist host countries. The high commissioner for refugees, Antonio Guterres, however, notes that the “world is failing to meet the needs of refugees and the countries hosting them” (UNHCR, 2014; New York Times, 2014). As a result, the financial burden and security risks placed on host countries have increased securitization at the borders. Regulation has slowed the registration of refugees as well as decreased the total number of refugees within host countries. In addition, insecurity and rise of violence in Iraq and Syria caused by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has closed part of the border to Iraq and restricted border crossings to Turkey, further limiting the options and security of Syrian refugees.

As previously mentioned, women and children comprise roughly three quarters of Syrian refugees. Traveling through conflict zones to reach international borders has become increasingly dangerous as refugees are forced to bribe smugglers and guards to reach their destination. In addition, rape and other forms of gender-based violence have become popular mechanisms of war in the Syrian conflict. Women Under Siege (2013) reports that 80 percent of women interviewed in their study, ages 7-46, had been raped. Perpetrators of sexual violence include Syrian government and military forces as well as local militias (Women Under Siege, 2013).

Children make up over half of the Syrian refugee conglomerate and are vastly affected by the traumatic experiences encountered within Syria and throughout their journeys to and across borders. Many children no longer attend school and turn to the labor market to make ends meet.

A *New York Times* article describes this situation as “Syria’s lost generation,” a reality that is not soon to vanish (2014).

UNHCR’s 2014 *Syria Regional Response Plan - Mid-Year Update* documents current problems, efforts, and funding provided by the international community and host communities in relationship to Syrian refugees abroad. While funding remains inadequate, the *Response Plan* includes UNHCR’s priorities for the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Access to basic needs, land, and an environment free of violence, abuse, and exploitation tops UNHCR’s list. As violence continues within the region, the international, humanitarian, and local governmental communities are addressing long-term solutions in response to the influx of Syrian refugees as well as internally displaced individuals within Syria.

### Western Mapping Sources

The information or digital age of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has transformed how Western audiences receive information and has increased the volume of available material. The proliferation of the visual information within society is called *visual culture* (Rose, 2012). While daily newspapers—one medium of visual culture—still go to print, there has been a surge of news reporting produced for the web. The *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, for example, have maintained print readership while adapting their journalism for enhanced display on the web. Western audiences are conveniently turning to the web for international news, national politics, scientific advancements, sports updates, celebrity gossip, and humanitarian crisis information. Maps published on the web are also part of our visual culture and shape access to information, our understanding of events, and the interpretation of our place in the world (Rose, 2012).

The humanitarian crisis in Syria has been extensively covered by online publications such as the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Reporting coverage, however, extends beyond national daily newspapers. Online coverage of the crisis is multi-scalar ranging from individual accounts documented through crowd-sourced social media to international organizations such as the UNHCR and REACH.

Maps are frequently published by the West to visually depict reference locations, conflict zones throughout Syria, areas controlled by ISIS as well as the dispersal of internally displaced peoples and refugees abroad. Western outlets utilize maps in various formats. The *New York Times*, for example, uses maps as supplements to textual and digital coverage. In contrast, the Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU) produces monthly reports consisting of standalone maps. In this analysis, I focus on nine sources that use various map types related to Syrian refugees and the conflict abroad. These sources are multi-scalar and include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)*, *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*, *National Geographic Magazine*, *Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU)*, *MapAction*, *Syria Tracker*, and *Syria Deeply*. These sources were chosen with four data collection goals in mind: sources are intertextual, sources are multi-scalar, sources are justified, and maps are content rich.

*The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are prominent daily US national newspapers that went to print in 1851 and 1877 respectively (New York Times, 2015b; Washington Post Company, 2013). Both newspapers are consistently ranked in the top five daily US newspapers in terms of circulation, and *New York Times* journalists have been awarded 117 Pulitzer Prizes (AAM, 2013; New York Times, 2015a). In terms of richness, *The New York Times* has mapped the crisis at varying scales (sub-national, national, and regional scales) and

frequently uses a wide variety of thematic map types such as choropleths, proportional symbol, and flow line maps as well as general reference maps.

*The Washington Post* was chosen because of its cartographic richness in storytelling scale related to the conflict. *The Washington Post* consistently maps individual and aggregated refugee stories. For example, the article *Refuge* highlights 18 stories of Syrian refugees. Images, videos, infographics, and a customized map accompany each story (Figures 6-8). In addition, *The Washington Post* has published stand-alone maps such as *Syrian refugee crisis map* (Figure 9, below). Figure 9, which incorporates a map and mimetic graphics, tells the story of Syrian refugees as a whole.

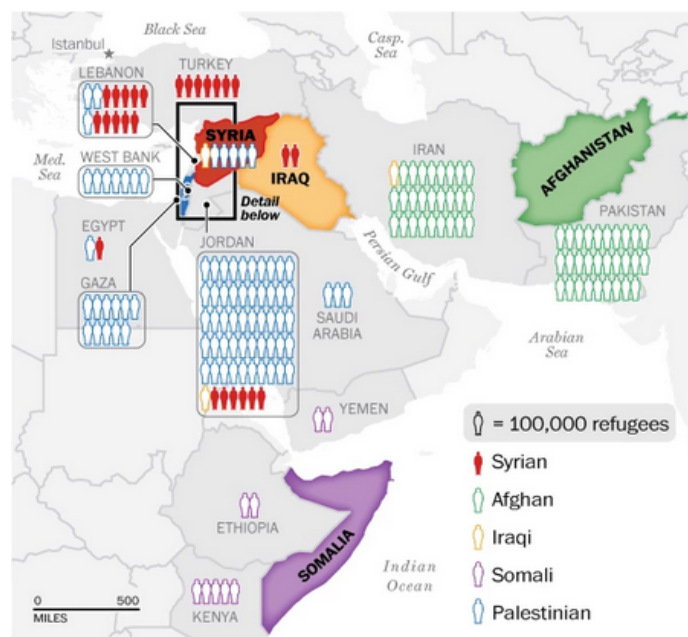


Figure 9: Thematic map illustrating refugee displacement throughout the region. [Map]. (2013). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-map/2013/12/13/2b758d6a-645a-11e3-a373-0f9f2d1c2b61\\_graphic.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-map/2013/12/13/2b758d6a-645a-11e3-a373-0f9f2d1c2b61_graphic.html)

UNHCR was founded in 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly with a mission to “lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide” (UNCHR, 2015). Maps and geographic data produced and maintained by UNHCR’s

Field Information and Coordination Support Section (FICSS) are integral to their humanitarian efforts abroad. Maps produced by UNHCR serve logistic purposes and are available freely online.

In 2008, UNHCR collaborated with Google to create a virtual tour of UN-sponsored refugee camps abroad and areas with heavy concentrations of displaced peoples. Google Earth is a free geospatial application that allows users to examine current and historic satellite imagery around the globe at multiple zoom levels. UNHCR developed a KML file that can be uploaded as a layer into Google Earth. This layer includes relevant images, articles, and videos of the realities faced by displaced peoples and refugees (Figure 10, below). Unfortunately, the Google Earth layer has not been maintained and several links are inactive. The goal of the project was for users to “see, hear, and develop an emotional understanding of what it is like to be a refugee” in Google Earth (UNHCR, 2015b).

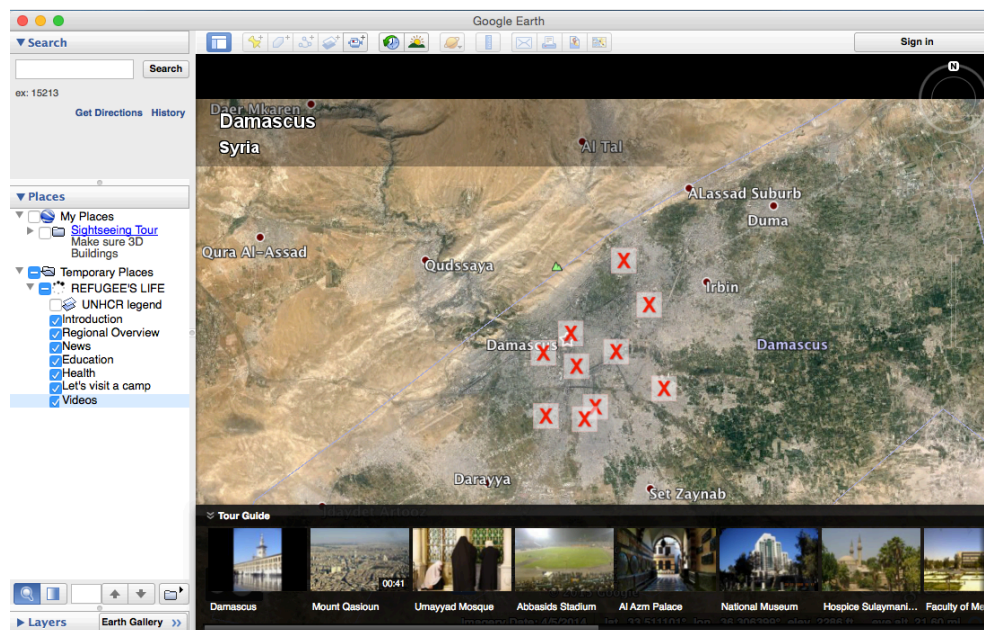


Figure 10: Google Earth displaying *Refugee Life*, a data layer developed by UNHCR that includes video, photos, and information about refugees around the world. [Interactive Map]. *Google Earth*. Retrieved April 21, 2015, from: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c4d3.html>

The National Geographic Society was established in 1888 and publishes *National Geographic Magazine* monthly. With 3 million subscribers and over 37 million readers worldwide, *National Geographic Magazine* supports its interests in “geography, archaeology and natural science, and the promotion of environmental and historical conservation” (*National Geographic*, 2015). In a study conducted by Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins, images from the magazine were collected because they are “the most culturally valued and potent media vehicle shaping American understandings of, and responses to, the world outside of the United States” (1993).

In the March 2014 issue, *National Geographic Magazine* published a twenty-six page special on the Syrian conflict and ongoing refugee crisis. The two-part special, titled *Syria: The Chaos of War*, provides riveting photojournalism, stories within Damascus, and an account of the Syrian exodus. Two maps accompany the first piece—one a reference map (Figure 11, below), and one detailing the location and magnitude of internally and externally displaced Syrians (Figure 12, next page). One year later, the magazine published a second, featured special, titled *Syrian Refugees: Flight into the Unknown*. The second publication centers on journalist Paul Salopek and his journey through Turkey amidst “one of the largest forced migrations in the world” (Salopek, 2015; 58).



Figure 11: A general reference map of the Syrian region. [Map]. (2014). *National Geographic Magazine*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/03/syrian-war/barnard-text>

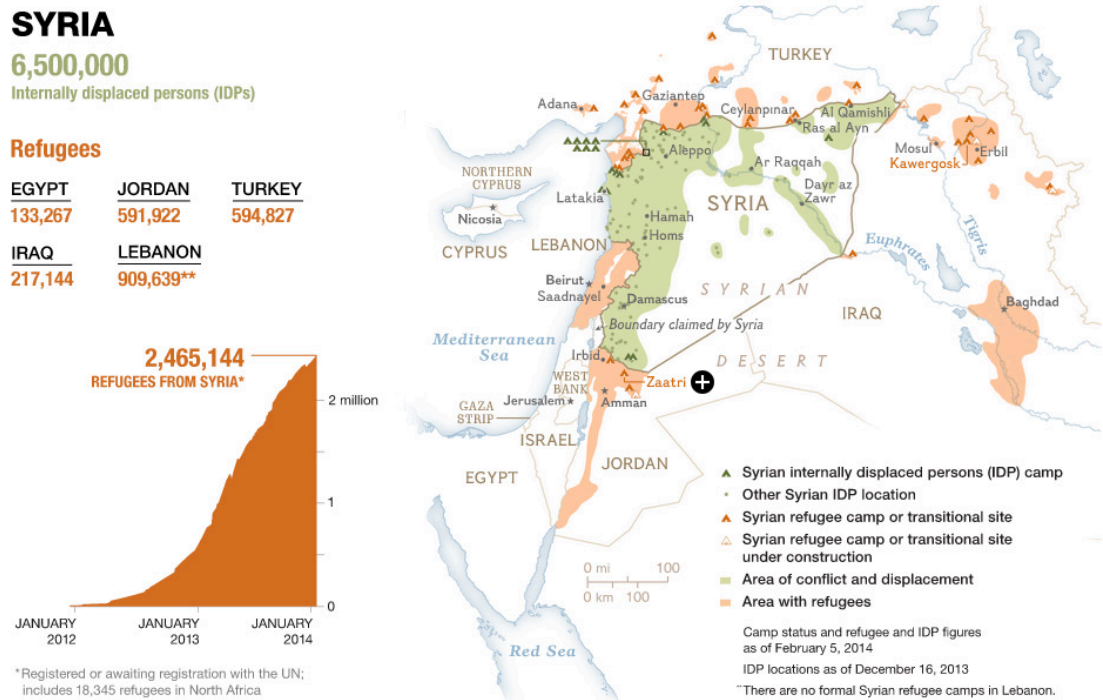


Figure 12: A thematic map, titled *Displaced by War*, showing refugees and IDPs through the Syrian region. [Map]. (2014). *National Geographic Magazine*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2014/03/syrian-war/refugee-map>

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), based in the UK, is “the world’s leading public service broadcaster” with a mission to “enrich people’s lives with programmes that inform, educate, and entertain” (BBC, 2015). BBC has an international presence reporting in 27 languages and spans television, radio, and online venues (BBC, 2015). BBC provides specialized online coverage of the Syrian conflict. A link to *Syria: Mapping the conflict* accompanies every Syrian related article providing background and reference material for the reader. *Mapping the conflict* is frequently updated and provides interactive and static information regarding control over border crossings, oil resources, conflict zones, and refugee locations (Figure 13).



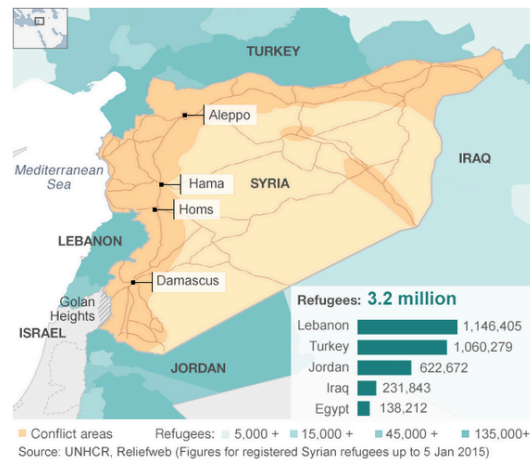


Figure 13: Choropleth map showing displaced Syrians throughout the region and conflict zones. [Map]. (2015). BBC. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22798391>

As part of the US Department of State, the Humanitarian Information Unit's (HIU) mission is "to identify, collect, analyze, and disseminate all-source information critical to U.S. Government decision-makers and partners in preparation for and response to humanitarian emergencies worldwide, and to promote innovative technologies and best practices for humanitarian information management" (HIU, 2015b). HIU disseminates up-to-date Syrian displacement reports that incorporate reference maps, thematic maps, graphs, and statistics to policy-makers abroad and humanitarian workers on the ground. HIU also houses and distributes geospatial data such as international boundaries, border crossing locations, cultural sites, internally displaced camp locations, and refugee camp locations (HIU, 2015a). The data are freely available and utilized by several Western media sources such as *The Washington Post* and *National Geographic Magazine*.

*Humanitarian Tracker* is a non-political, non-partisan, non-religious organization that provides a "forum [to] connect and empower citizens around the world by giving them a voice to

tell their story” (Humanitarian Tracker, 2011). *Syria Tracker*, a subsidiary project, relies on crowd-sourced reporting from citizen journalists. Eyewitness reports and social media reports of murders, rapes, chemical attacks, and water shortages locations and times have been uploaded to a live interactive map since 2011. The interactive map can be filtered by various categories including disease spread, chemical poisoning, twitter reports, rape, relief aid, refugees, and persons killed, missing or detained. *Syria Tracker* is a rich mapping source because stories and reports are told in real time by the individuals directly involved.

MapAction, a non-governmental agency founded in 2004, is made up of a network of volunteered geographic information systems specialists on call for humanitarian disasters worldwide. Members of the MapAction team are among the first to respond to any international disaster. After mobilization, MapAction gathers immediate, on the ground situation data. Situation maps are then distributed to national and international teams to manage logistics and humanitarian efforts in the disaster zone. MapAction has been involved in the ongoing Syrian conflict since 2013, providing a wealth of detailed geospatial information at varying scales.

*Syria Deeply* is an “independent digital media project led by journalists and technologists, exploring a new model of storytelling around a global crisis” (*Syria Deeply*, 2014). *Syria Deeply* utilizes digital aids such as narrative videos, presentations, timelines, graphics, and an interactive map to provide context to published articles about Syria. The interactive map, *Conflict Map*, displays casualties and refugees using proportional circles. The proportional symbols collapse or cluster depending on zoom level. The base map is provided by Mapbox and is continuously updated by OpenStreetMap.

The breadth, intertextuality, and richness of these nine sources justify their purpose to support the exploration and analysis of maps produced by and for Western audiences. Their

multi-scalar range provides a well-rounded overview of contemporary mapping techniques related to the Syrian conflict. Although the number of potential Western sources is vast given the proliferation of web-based materials, the nine chosen sources actively inform and shape our Western visual culture and understanding of Syrian refugees and the ongoing conflict across multiple scales.

## CHAPTER 3: A Review of the Literature

This thesis draws on research and literature at the intersection of border studies, critical feminist perspectives on mapping, and mapping stories.

### Borders

#### Traditional borders

By definition, borders signify “limits and discontinuities in space” (Popescu, 2010: 161). Conventionally, we think of borders not only as limits and discontinuities but also as modes of organization and modes of separation. In this respect, borders have a tendency to create an *us* versus *them* dichotomy. Although there are exceptions in the case of enclaves, exclaves, and borderlands, this dichotomy is often embedded with notions of identity relating to cultural customs, language, religion, and shared history, creating a sense of commonality within a group. It is also embedded with notions of territoriality relating to power, sovereignty, and control over a given space (Diener and Hagen, 2012; Popescu, 2012; Elden, 2013).

By convention, borders are associated with nation-state lines of delineation and appear permanent and static. Yet with a passport, borders quickly become passable or permeable and experienced. In the rich history of dynamic and experienced borders, borders actually precede the nation-state as precursors such as city-states, empires, and transnational organizations historically delineated territory in different ways (Diener and Hagen, 2012; Popescu, 2012, Elden, 2013). Stuart Elden (2013) painstakingly deconstructs and documents territoriality and the evolution of borders in his book *The Birth of Territory*.

The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 “established the concept of equality among states based on the principle of mutually exclusive sovereignty over territories delineated by borders”

(Popescu, 2012: 34). The treaty sought to avoid overlapping territoriality and power by designating rigid borders, changing the interstate system from a network of permeable boundaries and frontiers to a structured, calculated grid system (Diener and Hagen, 2012; Popescu, 2012). This concept of borders as rigid and calculated has translated to other units of analysis such as provinces, municipalities, private property, and public spaces. In this way, borders, *us* versus *them*, are now multi-scalar and crossed constantly at varying levels in our daily lives (Diener and Hagen, 2012).

“Westphalian” centrism has translated to what John Agnew calls the *territorial trap*. The territorial trap is comprised of three assumptions: the state is a fixed unit of sovereign space, the state strictly separates domestic and foreign relations, and the state is a container of homogenous societies (Agnew, 2009: 22). These assumptions are problematic in that “social, economic, and political life cannot be contained within the territorial boundaries of the state” (Agnew, 1994: 77). Although Agnew deconstructed these assumptions, they continue to reinforce one another “to convey a sense of historical legitimacy and contemporary permanence for a state-centered view of power and its delineation of global space” (Diener and Hagen, 2012: 14).

Yet Syrian borders are not trapped, fixed units. Nation-state borders within the region have experienced dynamic territoriality and border changes in a relatively short amount of time. Prior to World War I, the Middle East including Syria was divided into administrative areas within the Ottoman Empire. Although under control of the Ottomans, these administrative areas remained semi-autonomous with cultural identity intact. This was a very different geopolitical landscape compared to that of today, as the Ottomans did not seek a homogenous state (Hitti, 2002).

With the advent of World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the borders in the region were redrawn by Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot, international diplomats of British and French descent. A series of border negotiations led to the establishment of British and French mandates in 1920 that transferred sovereign power and control from the Ottomans to the Allied countries. Syria under the influence and mandate of the French became the largest Arab state to emerge at the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, and later gained complete independence from France in 1946. The conflict and crisis in Syria today have brought Syria's borders into transition once again, with Turkey advocating for a buffer zone or borderland with Syria to prevent violent spill over from the conflict and ISIS insurgency (Hitti, 2002).

Although borders are traditionally conceptualized as lines on a map, borderlands or border regions often exist as spaces on either side of the border. Borderlands act as transition zones between two political entities and are sites of cultural and economic interconnectivity, interaction, and cross-border activity. Rumford states "the idea of the borderland is an important one because it signals the spatiality of borders themselves; no longer simply lines on a map or a physical frontier between nation-states, borders have their own space and have become zones of exchange, connectivity, and security" (Rumford, 2006: 161-162). The "fuzzy definitions" of border regions directly impact individuals living within this zone (Newman, 2011: 37).

Identities, for example, frequently overlap on either side of the border and the porosity of some borders increase with the advent of borderlands as seen in the European Union. However, the "absolute notions of inclusion or exclusion are fuzzy and undefined" in these border regions, which further destabilizes the notion of rigid and fixed delineations (Newman, 2011: 37-29).

As mentioned in Agnew's deconstruction of the territorial trap, nation-states including Syria are not containers of homogenous societies. Syrian society is religiously and ethnically

diverse, and in the case of Alawites and Sunnis, as well as the Arabs and Kurds, this diversity has led to conflict. Socioeconomic class also plays an important role in forming deeply ingrained dividing lines. The dynamics of power, money, and control between groups based on religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic status have divided the Syrian population and contributed to the ongoing conflict.

Borders and borderlands are also socially constructed. By combining the study of borders with critical perspectives, Rumford (2012) argues that borders can be understood as fluid social and political constructions embedded with notions of territoriality, sovereignty, and national identity. Silvey (2005) argues that the development of the nation-state and its associated borders closely coincides with the power dynamics of gender and social hierarchy. As citizenship and inclusion within a border is granted based on cohesion to the group or nation, those who are not included are marginalized. Feminist border and migration studies conceptualize the nation-state, borders, and citizenship as gendered and make the point that gendered borders are found across scales from the state to the home (Silvey, 2005).

Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002) stretch the conceptions of traditional, static, and trapped borders in their analysis of border crossings through women's narrative experiences. In their study, they examine women's accounts as told in emails to understand the experiences of border crossings and the ways women imagine and construct nation-state borders. For example, one participant replied that borders and boundaries were not a part of her consciousness, whereas another recalled looking at borders as protection from the people over there that "wanted to kill us all" (Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler, 2002: 336).

Guidice and Giubilaro (2015) extend narrative experience of borders to the term *borderscape*, which seeks to better understand the complexity, experience, and performance of

borders taking individual realities into account. By crossing borders, for example, migrants, refugees, and tourists continually create individual realities of what the border is. In other words, borders are dynamic and performed by bodies that cross them (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015).

Western media sources have also utilized this narrative approach to document Syrian border crossings. Journalists such as Kevin Sullivan of the *Washington Post* document stories of traumatic experience and fleeing the country amidst violence (2013). Another example is UNHCR's report titled *Woman Alone*, which takes a narrative approach to understanding life after fleeing Syria (2014).

### Non-traditional borders

Borders and the division of space can also be conceived of in a non-traditional sense, including but not limited to gendered social space, language systems, and embodied borders such as the body. Although less visible on the landscape, and with no need for a passport, non-traditional borders may be restrictive or liberating, porous or rigid. In "Rethinking Territory", Antonsich (2011) expands the traditional concept of territorial space to socio-spatial borders and boundaries that may not be measureable and advocates the need to incorporate such non-traditional borders into the broader realm of border studies. Similarly, Lena Näre (2012) discusses non-traditional borders and boundary-drawing in relationship to class, migration, and sexuality. In Näre's conceptualization, borders are formed through contact spaces where people engage and interact in particular ways and in particular spaces (Näre, 2012: 364).

In her piece *House with four walls*, Zarina, a print artist, depicts an unsettling image of four lines or edges that enclose an empty space, an interpretation of the non-traditional borders of the home (Figure 14). Ranu Samantrai writes that the image is "simultaneously comforting and



tense, protective and constraining” (2004: 180). One interpretation of Zarina’s image may render a cultural norm similar to the veil, another as a mechanism of isolation and control, and another of safe haven and empowerment.

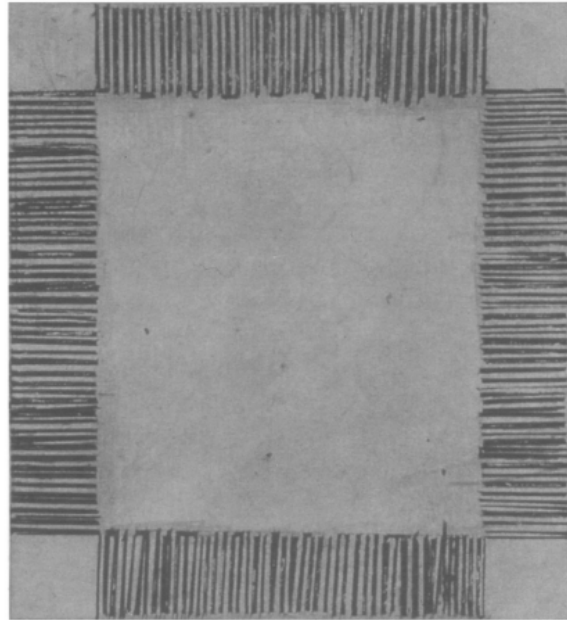


Figure 14: Print piece, titled *House with four walls*, created by Zarina depicting the non-traditional border of the home. Samantrai, R. (2004). *Cosmopolitan cartographies: art in a divided world. Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 4(2), 168-198.

While stories of Syrian refugees consistently recall interaction with traditional borders such as Syria’s international border with Jordan, non-traditional borders remain invisible, or if visible, unidentified. In a 2014 UNHCR report titled *Woman Alone*, the women interviewed recount feelings of isolation in a foreign country as well as in refugee camps. Feelings of isolation reflect invisible social borders or barriers that are created by interaction or lack of interaction.

The women also mentioned money as a significant constraint in their daily lives. The presence or absence of money also has the ability to create permeable and impermeable barriers, and a lack of money creates a socio-spatial border by restricting movement, access, and

opportunity. Some job opportunities for Syrian refugees are bound by non-traditional borders of gendered space as women may not be accepted into specific workplaces and bound by nationality as competition for jobs intensifies with local populations. Similar to the interpretation of Zarina's *House with four walls*, these non-traditional borders faced by Syrian refugees are individually experienced and interpreted.

### **Borders and Globalization**

Definitions and interpretations of globalization are wide ranging and highlight economics, technology, culture, and politics to varying degrees. Benjamin Barber, for example, defines globalization in terms of “one commercially homogenous global network” or “McWorld” (Croucher, 2004: 11-13). Martin Khor defines globalization as an extension of colonization into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Croucher, 2004:11-13). Hartmut Behr frames globalization in terms of time-space compression in which the process of international movement of money, people, pop culture, technology, goods, services, and ideas has drastically increased in “scope, volume, and velocity” (2010: 1339-1343). For the purposes of this paper, I will utilize Sheila Croucher's definition and treat globalization as a cluster of related changes including but not limited to economic, technological, cultural, and political changes that increase the multiscalar interconnectedness (2004:13).

Some of these changes include an increase and ease of mobility and communication, and movement across international borders, which in turn, changes the geopolitical climate through transnationalization—the increase of inter-state collaboration and cooperation, denationalization—the decrease of state power, and the deterritorialization or deconstruction of territory as we know it. Non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and terrorist organizations operate across borders, decreasing the power and

sovereignty of state actors in a process known as denationalization (Herod, 2009; Scholte, 2000; Warf, 2014). Transnationalization and denationalization have prompted deterritorialization. As such, borders have become less rigid and more permeable.

The dissolution of borders due to deterritorialization challenges the power and sovereignty of the nation-state. Thomas Friedman (2006) argues that with increases in mobility, integrated economies, and global capitalist ideologies, borders are meaningless. Herod (2009) points out that what Friedman lacks in his argument is recognition that globalization is a historical, multi-faceted, and multi-scalar process. For example, the Internet and computer technology have had profound impacts on international transactions. While the Internet is assumed to be a global phenomenon, access to the Internet and the advantages it provides are not evenly distributed globally. Therefore, access to the Internet has shrunk the world for select individuals while neglecting individuals without access. As a result, globalization on a local scale is not always illustrative of globalization at the global scale (Herod, 2009).

Globalization with its elements of transnationalization, denationalization, and deterritorialization directly affects the role of borders in the 21st century. First, borders and sovereignty are under attack from multiple directions: from above by international and transnational organizations and from below by social unrest, independence movements, and terrorist organizations (Jones, 2012). Second, with the rise of immigration and increased mobility, formerly rigid borders have relaxed and become permeable or semi-permeable. This permeability, however, is not uniform. Permeability is dependent on variables such as nationality, educational attainment, job market, political affiliation, access to resources, and money (Jones, 2012).

Increased securitization is also having an effect on borders. Whereas Friedman perceived a flat world ontology, Jones points out that borders tighten up just as easily as they fade. Post-September 11, securitization emerged as physical and built border walls such as the US/Mexican border, Israel's external border with Egypt and Israel's internal borders with Palestine (Jones, 2012). In a globalizing world that is not flat, borders retain their shape, their sovereignty, and their control albeit to varying degrees (Jones, 2012).

For people forced into migration during conflict, borders lie in a nexus of securitization and refuge. Syrians escaping the current conflict are faced with geopolitical decisions at the state level when they attempt to cross borders. In October of 2014, while hosting over 600,000 Syrian refugees, Jordan closed its borders. Prior to the sudden halt in registration, Jordanian refugee camps registered upwards of 2,000 individuals daily. Jordan has now joined the US-led military coalition against the Islamic State prompting further securitization of its own borders. While Jordanian authorities maintain that their borders are open and are only restricted to security risks, many Syrians are stuck in Syria with limited access to food, shelter, and proper healthcare (Sweis, 2014: 12).

### **Visualizing and mapping borders**

Not only do borders have a rich history in a geopolitical context, borders also have a rich presence in past and present cartography. On a surficial level, political and administrative borders are conventionally used as a unit of analysis for thematic mapping or as a unit of organization for mental mapping and understanding the world. These borders can be quickly downloaded from sources like the United States Census Bureau and Natural Earth and utilized for geospatial analysis and mapping. This portion of the literature review critically examines the

evolution and production of borders in cartography as well as contemporary critical approaches to mapping borders.

In his examination of the historical and contemporary roles of maps in international and domestic politics, Jeremy Black pays particular interest to the mapping of borders and frontier zones (1997). Black documents the transformations of borders within maps beginning with Egyptian maps of gold mines and Roman cadastral maps. Maps and borders became increasingly important into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the rise of imperialism, nationalism, and war as power became territorial and “territoriality required knowledge—locational specificity” (Black, 1997: 135). As such, contemporary maps are trapped in a state-centric understanding of world politics, identity, nationalism, and the *us* versus *them* mentality. Cartography adds to this territorial understanding by reinforcing borders in a visual way.

Anna Moore and Nicholas Perdue (2014) delve into the declining use of maps in geopolitical publications in their article “Imagining a Critical Geopolitical Cartography.” Historically, geopolitics and maps go hand in hand because maps are the “perfect symbol of the state” and they continually reinforce each other through sovereignty and boundedness. The use and influence of geopolitical maps have been well documented and critiqued by contemporary theorists. Maps in general have been problematized and deconstructed as sources of power, hegemony, visibility, and masculinity (Wood, 1992, Black, 1997, and Kwan, 2008).

To counter the stigma surrounding the use and the implications of geopolitical maps, political geographers have limited their use of maps and “geopolitical cartography has never been recovered” (Moore and Perdue, 2014: 894). Moore and Perdue call attention to the widening gap between critical geopolitics and critical cartography and challenge researchers to find alternative ways of mapping that more accurately reflect contemporary geopolitics. The

technique produced by the authors is not the only solution to this divide; it is one avenue of exploration. *Contours of Contention* (Figure 15) is a geopolitical map that visualizes contested territory and lived realities of individuals in the Kashmir region, challenging the conventional state-centric thinking often depicted in maps.

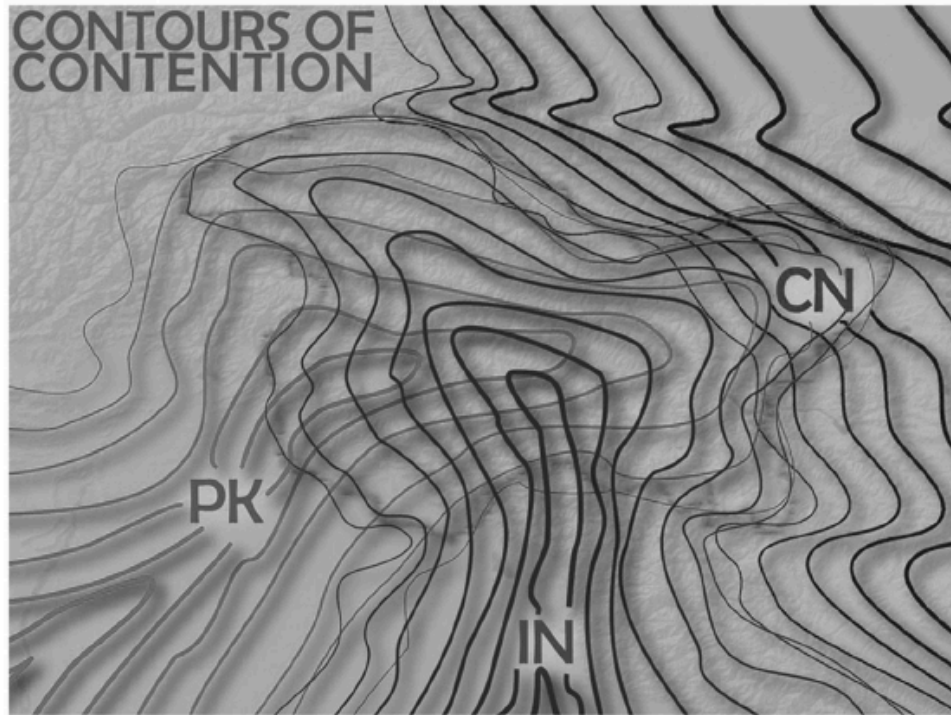


Figure 15: *Contours of Contention* illustrates tension and conflicting control by three state actors over the Kashmir region. [Map]. Moore, A. & Perdue, N. (2014). Imagining a Critical Geopolitical Cartography. *Geography Compass*, 892-901.

Cartography's role in solidifying our understanding of borders has been explored by artists. For example, Christina Guidice and Chiara Giubilaro (2015) examine the imagination and production of borders through alternative visualization. The authors examine "how artwork can interrupt and transform the spaces that they [borders] represent" (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015: 80). The artists contest conventional border representations and reveal hegemonic discourse, border complexities and experiences, and embodied borders.

Guidice and Giubilaro argue that conventional borders are based on some level of symbolization, commonly simplified into lines on a map. This symbolic reduction is a “clear power strategy developed by the nation-state to define and manage its space” (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015: 81). Continuous lines are convenient symbols for borders because their apparent permanence cannot be contested. The linear representation of borders as lines reinforces the fixity and passivism of borders. With that, borders depicted as lines appear static, not experienced, and essential. However, dashed lines are also used to symbolize borders. Dashes disrupt continuous lines and present a sense of impermanence, experience, and fluidity.

Guidice and Giubilaro (2015) present artists that transform the understandings of borders and representation through imagination and dis-bordering. Mona Hatoum, for example, depicts the world by using glass marbles in her piece *Map*. The marbles are carefully arranged on the floor to create recognizable continents amidst the ocean. Political boundaries are not visible. Viewers further dis-border the map by rearranging the marbles. The movement and flexibility of the marble display reveals the dynamism of borders (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015). Maja Bajevic performs her individual experience with borders in *Dressed Up*. In this piece, Bajevic prints a map of Yugoslavia, her home country, on fabric and creates a dress from the material. The cutting and sewing of the dress reflects tragedy associated with the war and the dress becomes an embodied symbol to be worn and carried with the artist (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015). The border is quickly understood as a lived, *worn* reality. Guidice and Giubilaro (2015) focus solely on the transformation of borders and the symbolization of borders in media such as artwork, literary landscapes, iconography, and film thus neglecting cartography.

Andre Reyes Novaes explores the intersection of map art and critical geopolitics surrounding Colombia and Venezuela’s shared border. As Black (1997) mentioned, maps have

shaped representations of the state and have instilled imagined divisions between countries. These static visual representations found in cartography and media maps contradict critical, geopolitical understandings of dynamic, experienced, and performed borders. Novaes (2015: 122) identifies this false visual representation as “one of the main challenges for contemporary border studies.”

Novaes studies the visual representation of borders in *Projecto Mapa*, which challenged contemporary artists in Colombia and Venezuela to “demystify” the map, its borders, and the transnational relationship between the two countries. Artists were presented with an amalgamated map (Figure 16) of Colombia and Venezuela that merged the two countries into one imagined country. Artists were asked to create new maps that more accurately reflect narratives of shared history, intertwined independence stories, and a peaceful future (Novaes, 2015: 127).

The first artist replicated an “old style” map combining the countries’ shared history into one (Figure 17). The fine print surrounding the map, however, reinforces state boundary discourse and fixed borders. Two other maps produced in *Projecto Mapa* replace the former interstate boundary with a dove occupying the location of the borders (a visual display of peace) and two intertwined bodies (a visual display of entangled history) (Figures 19 and 20). Pabelo, another artist, recreates the border as a stitched or hand-sewn division (Figure 21).





FIGURE 1 *Proyecto Mapa*, 2000. Luis Angel Parra and Ricardo Benaim.

Figure 16: Amalgamated map of Colombia and Venezuela given to artists in Proyecto Mapa to re-create the border. Guidice, C. & Giubilaro, C. (2015). Re-Imagining the Border: Border Art as a Space of Critical Imagination and Creative Resistance. *Geopolitics*, 20(1), 79-94.



FIGURE 2 *Proyecto Mapa*, Alvaro Moreno, 2000.

Figure 17: Alvaro Moreno's piece for *Proyecto Mapa* that focuses on the shared history between Colombia and Venezuela. Guidice, C. & Giubilaro, C. (2015). Re-Imagining the Border: Border Art as a Space of Critical Imagination and Creative Resistance. *Geopolitics*, 20(1), 79-94.



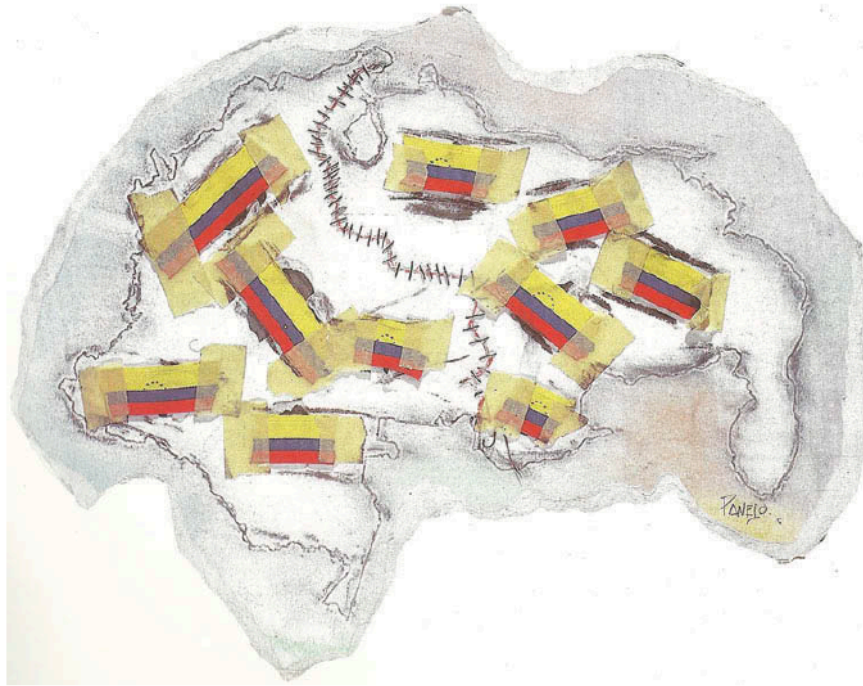
**FIGURE 4** *Proyecto Mapa*, Carlos Poveda, 2000.

Figure 18: Carlos Poveda's piece for *Proyecto Mapa* that re-symbolizes the Colombian-Venezuelan border with a dove representing peace. Guidice, C. & Giubilaro, C. (2015). Re-Imagining the Border: Border Art as a Space of Critical Imagination and Creative Resistance. *Geopolitics*, 20(1), 79-94.



**FIGURE 5** *Proyecto Mapa*, Ana Patricia Palacios, 2000.

Figure 19: Patricia Palacios' piece for *Proyecto Mapa* that re-symbolizes the Colombia-Venezuelan border with intertwined bodies. Guidice, C. & Giubilaro, C. (2015). Re-Imagining the Border: Border Art as a Space of Critical Imagination and Creative Resistance. *Geopolitics*, 20(1), 79-94.



**FIGURE 6** *Proyecto Mapa*, Panelo, 2000.

Figure 20: Panelo's piece for *Proyecto Mapa* that re-symbolizes the Colombian-Venezuelan border with a stitched line. Guidice, C. & Giubilaro, C. (2015). Re-Imagining the Border: Border Art as a Space of Critical Imagination and Creative Resistance. *Geopolitics*, 20(1), 79-94.

With the goal of creating a borderless map, *Proyecto Mapa* failed. In the absence of borders, artists replicated conventional border delineations—although with new symbolization techniques. The imagined maps and the borders of Colombia and Venezuela reflect strong national identities and imaginations. Novaes links the perseverance of the borders to popular media cartography and imagined geographies where themes of securitization due to violence and transnational movement of economies prevail. Transnational economies, for example, imply fluidity and open borders but also a clear distinction between point A and point B, in this case, Colombia and Venezuela. Given securitization and openness, “borders remain important [and mapped] in our *borderless* world” (Novaes, 2015: 138).

## Critical and feminist perspectives on mapping

The 'science' of mapping emerged in the 1950s during the quantitative revolution with the development of computational techniques, technological advancements, and the establishment of cartography as an academic discipline and science in the wake of the Second World War (Martin, 2005). In the late 1970s, Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing technologies began radically changing geography and cartography and as Harley argued, has contributed to the "stalling" of cartographic innovation. Harley wrote that it would "appear that we are still working largely in either a 'premodern,' or a 'modern' rather than in a 'postmodern' climate of thought" lagging behind theoretic developments in the human and social sciences as a whole (Harley, 1989: 1). It is important to note that advances in critical cartography in recent years might alter Harley's rather negative perception.

The rise of critical and feminist perspectives in the social sciences in the last 20 years has directly challenged traditional methods and techniques derived during the quantitative revolution, including cartography, GIS, remote sensing, and spatial statistics. Although feminist perspectives are vast, there is common agreement that "any claim to transcendent objectivity or truth is considered untenable, since all knowledge must be acquired through knowers situated in particular subject positions and social contexts." Because GIS and cartographic research methods and practices rely on objectivity and truth (Kwan, 2002: 646; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991), from this hardline feminist standpoint, they lack the ability to represent differences and subjective experience, the foundation of critical and feminist perspectives. Mei Po Kwan (2002) and Sara McLafferty (1995) have explored new methods and approaches to critical feminist perspectives, however, and their strategic techniques or use of multiple techniques have adapted conventional, traditional methods to reveal subjective experiences. Four themes from critical and

feminist perspectives on science that are relevant to this study include *vision, reflexivity, the body, intersectionality, and transformation*.

## Vision

In the feminist critique, GIS and cartography are highly visual practices that codify the quantitative revolution's emphasis on vision, visualization, and the objectifying eye (Kwan, 2002: 648). Western mapping practices are based on *the view from nowhere* and the male or voyeuristic gaze where elevated sight presumes dominance over the landscape (Pickles, 2004: 85-86). In Michele Foucault's analysis, the objectifying eye is connected to surveillance (Foucault, 1977); Haraway relates vision and technology to an elevated, conquering *male gaze* and the "visual appropriation of the world" (1991). Likewise, Rosalyn Deutsche details the voyeuristic or masculinized gaze as "distancing, mastering, [and] objectifying" (1991: 11). By representing space as the view from nowhere, maps, remotely sensed data, and geographic information promote universalist and masculine ideologies which neglect on-the-ground realities of difference whether it be gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, or disability (Kwan, 2002).

While some feminist perspectives view GIS and cartography as inherently flawed, some feminist practitioners such as Mei Po Kwan have re-appropriated GIS through multi-method research, participatory GIS, incorporation of qualitative research into formerly quantitative methods, and the inclusion of subjective experiences into GIS. For example, Sarah Elwood used GIS to understand socio-spatial problems involving women and marginalized groups in a neighborhood-mapping project (Elwood, 1998). Kwan (2002) deconstructs vision and expands the dimensions of vision into 3D space with time-space cubes to convey the subjective



experiences of Muslim women post-September 11 and color-codes the GPS tracks of participants in relationship to fear.

## Reflexivity

In addition to a focus on subjective knowledge that transcends objectivity, critical and feminist perspectives “recognize the partiality and situatedness of all knowledge and the importance of critical reflections on one’s subject position relative to research participants, the research process, and the knowledge produced (Kwan, 2002: 646). Otherwise known as *reflexivity*, this is inward-facing reflection on the researcher’s positionality within the story or within the map.

In her article “Under Western eyes,” Chandra Mohanty draws attention to the colonization of “Woman” and deconstructs problematic research and methods based on universalistic research approaches. Mohanty argues for recognition of one’s reflexivity within the research process as a means to counteract objectifying results (2003). Feminist geographer Kim England promotes reflexivity in fieldwork because it allows the researchers to be open to challenges regarding their position as outsiders, considers the consequences faced by research and participant interactions, and “dismisses the observational distance” with the reflexive “I” (England, 1994: 82).

## The Body

Body and embodiment research took off in the early 1990s and spanned several disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, philosophy, gender studies, and geography. Prior

to this expansion of thought, the body was neglected in academic research as many instead focused on cognition and the mind. The separation of the body and the mind is one of many Cartesian dichotomies faced in Western geographic research (Sprunk, 2010: 289).

The body and embodiment is an evolving research agenda and has been interpreted through a variety of theoretical lenses. According to Dana Sprunk (2010), the body was widely overlooked and under-theorized in geographic research leading up to the 1990s. Sprunk uses a powerful cartographic example to explain this void:

Typically, the body appeared as a point or line on a map. This was also true for medical geography up to the mid 1990s, which did not focus on the daily struggles of the ill or disabled people but solely on the body as a carrier of viruses and illness. The outcome of such research was usually a map indicating the spread of certain illnesses (2010: 289).

In Sprunk's example, the lived reality of the ill or disabled person is invisible. Furthermore, the individual as well as his or her daily struggles are reduced to points and lines silencing experiences and making the body invisible. Gill Valentine (1999: 319) notes this gap in bodily research and recognizes the rise of the body as a "geographical location" in feminist geographic research in the 1990s.

Today, bodily research has expanded into several theoretic accounts. Poststructuralist theorists deconstruct the body in relationship to society and power, and non-representational theorists such as Nigel Thrift understand the body as an iterative performance (Longhurst, 2012). Feminist theorists like Gillian Rose (1993) argue that the body is part of a mind/body dualism that is highly gendered. The mind, for example, is often prioritized as rational, objective, and masculine, whereas the body appears to be irrational, subjective, and feminine. The body is *othered*. It is used to separate the masculine mind from the feminine body. Therefore, a feminist bodily approach to geographic research focuses not on universal knowledge but on individual knowledge (the mind) and experience (the body). Because of the subjectivity involved in bodily

research, Rose (1993) calls for the researcher's acknowledgement of positionality and situated knowledge.

So, what is the body? At the surficial level, the body seems obvious: hands, feet, torso, and face. According to Robyn Longhurst (1997), at a deeper level, the body becomes much more complicated and is without a clear definition. Bodies are used for particular functions, actions, and roles but are also used for the "expression of moral judgments" and experiences (Longhurst, 1997: 487). Bodies ground identities and become canvases for expression. Longhurst continues that there are vast definitions for the body and it is nearly impossible to precisely define it (1997: 486-490). Mariam Fraser and Monica Greco summarize Gilles Deleuze's definition of the body such that the body is "not a 'thing', but a becoming, a series of processes, movements, intensities, and flows" (2005: 45). Elizabeth Grosz defines the body in two parts: the body and the human body:

By *body* I understand a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, muscles, and skeletal structure which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and organization only through their psychical and social inscription as the surface and raw materials of an integrated and cohesive totality... The body becomes a *human* body, a body which coincides with the 'shape' and space of a psyche... a body which thereby defines the limits of experience and subjectivity (1992: 243).

Furthermore, Gill Valentine (1999: 330) focuses the senses of bodily experiences and on bodies as "constellations of social relations." Valentine continues:

The body is after all, a tactile space—always sensing and actively engaging with itself (the inside) and the world (the outside)... For although our bodies are located in space and time, space and time are also perceived through the difference senses of the body (Valentine, 1999: 331).

For the purposes of this study, I focus my attention on the latter portion of Grosz's (1992) definition, the body as subjective experience, and Valentine's (1999) definition, the body as a sensor of time and space. In the end, the body is "the geography closest in" (Rich, 1986: 212).



## Intersectionality

Recognizing the reflexivity and positionality of the researcher lends itself to understanding the intersectionality of research participants such as the “complexities, singularities, and interconnections between communities” of women and men (Mohanty, 2013: 549). An intersectional approach to research and cartography would replace vast generalizations of experience with acknowledgement of the complexities of identity. Intersectionality avoids the categorization of individuals as having singular identities such as women and men, and focuses instead on individuals’ multiple identities including race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, and education. Intersectionality recognizes the fluxes and rearrangement of identities and resists the placement of individuals into strict categories.

To balance what might appear as difference or disconnection of identities, a feminist approach also includes a focus on commonality, an acknowledgement of *connected differences*. For example, Mohanty utilizes the idea of connected difference to promote a comparative feminist studies model that “allows students to see the complexities, singularities, and interconnections between communities of women such that power, privilege, agency, and dissent can be made visible and engaged with” (2013: 549). With this model, connected difference can be bridged over time and space. In the Yuval-Davis and Stetzler study of women and border experiences, connected difference or commonality was found, as “similar imaginings would sometimes be constructed by people who grew up in very different parts of the world but under similar conditions (2002: 335).

Intersectionality has been used to visualize experience and place in narrative mapping. In *Framing the Days*, for example, Margaret Pearce maps John McDonnell’s fur trade route based on his diary entries (2008). She focuses on his experiences and identities associated with place

by framing each day in it owns map, a technique that cannot aggregate across individuals nor days of experience (Pearce, 2008).

The print artist Zarina both aggregates and connects individuals through commonality in her pieces “Dividing Line” (Figure 21) and “Mapping the Dislocation” (Figure 22). In both pieces, the stories are generalized and can be applied or interpreted to anyone who has experienced borders or dislocation. The *connection* is the border and the *difference* is the experience of that border. Aggregated experience of the border is represented as connected difference through Zarina’s use of elusiveness and lack of identifying material within the map. The border can be anywhere.

Another example of connected difference and aggregated experience is the work of Kevin Lynch in *Image of the City* (Figure 23). Lynch, an urban planner, used cognitive mapping to understand the degree to which individuals experience the city. The more vivid or memorable an element within the city, the more “legible” that element appears (Lynch, 1960: 9). While Lynch took an intersectional and subjective approach to understanding the city by using cognitive maps, he quantified and aggregated his participants’ experiences into a single map. Lynch used ordinal symbols to reflect the degree to which a city element was experienced by the aggregate. For example, if eight in ten participants noted a specific landmark, the landmark is highly legible, therefore, a widely shared experienced. Lynch understood the subjective experiences of the city but was able to create connected difference in his aggregated maps.

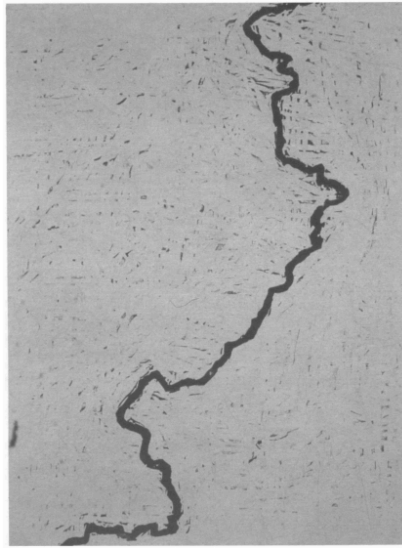


Figure 21: Print piece, titled *Dividing Line*, created by Zarina depicting a traditional border with multiple interpretations. Samantrai, R. (2004). *Cosmopolitan cartographies: art in a divided world. Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 4(2), 168-198.

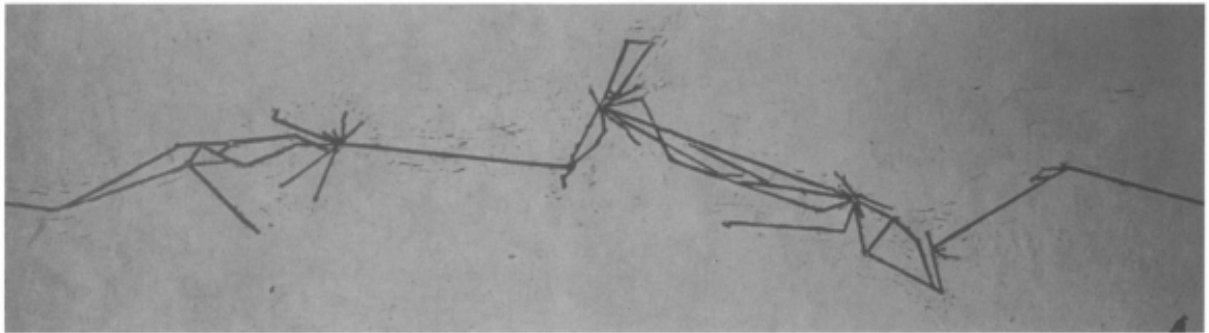


Figure 22: Print piece, titled *Mapping the Dislocations*, created by Zarina depicting mobility and border crossings. Samantrai, R. (2004). *Cosmopolitan cartographies: art in a divided world. Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, 4(2), 168-198.

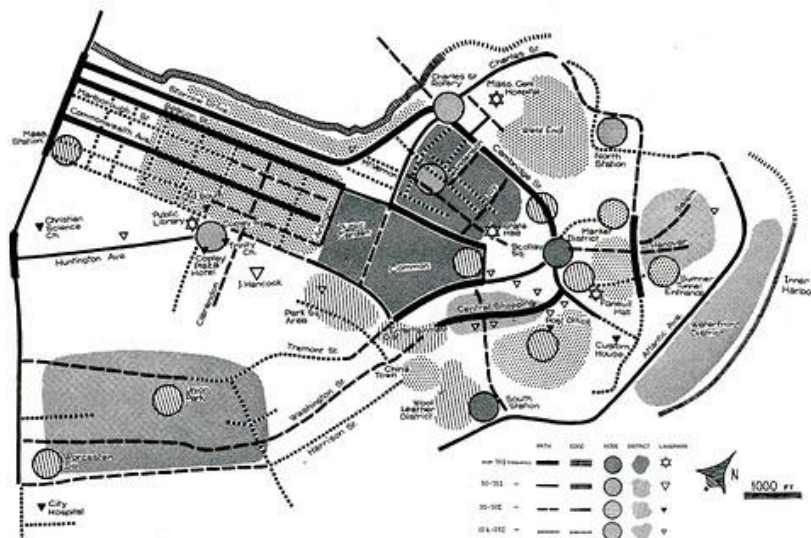


Figure 23: The city of Boston as experienced by one individual. Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city* (Vol. 11, p. 146). MIT press.

## Inclusion and Transformation

Inclusion and transformation are additional theoretical frameworks within feminist and critical theory. Inclusive feminism emphasizes the incorporation of women into roles predominantly held by men. Mechanisms to support the integration of women into the military, for example, include quota systems and international pressure to “democratize” military personnel. In contrast, a transformative, feminist perspective on the military would emphasize the broadening of this perspective to a recognition of the masculinization of the military with the rise of global securitization. A transformative approach deconstructs what it means to be female and what it means to be male, and it “redefines” or “un-defines” social constructions such as gender. It would put women at the decision-making table and seek to redefine the masculinization of the military and its approach to security as a whole. (Lorber, 2001; Runyan, A.S. and Peterson, V.S., 2014; Everett, J. and Charlton, S.E.M., 2014)

Similarly, a transformative approach to cartography first deconstructs the map and then restructures how it is conceptualized. Edward Soja explores transformative perspectives in relationship to cartography through a ‘trialectic’ consisting of *first-*, *second-*, and *thirdspaces* (Cresswell, 2013: 209; Soja, 1999). Firstspace is driven by remnants of the quantitative revolution relating to the objective, scientific realities depicted in maps. Firstspace is a universalist approach that utilizes the elevated, male gaze previously discussed. In relationship with the critical turn in cartography, secondspace reveals ideology, power, and hidden metanarratives within the cartographic process but maintains mapping as a representation of lived reality or “truth” (Harley, 1989; Kitchin, 2009). The transformative approach to cartography falls into the realm of thirdspace where maps are truly deconstructed and rethought,

as they become performative signs of power, resistance, and “creative becoming” (Cresswell, 2013: 209; Soja, 1999).

## Mapping stories

Stories are told in the dimensions of time and space, and maps have routinely been used as modes of communicating a story by grounding or geolocating it in space. Story maps in literature visually organize concepts, events, and elements revealing connections or disconnections within the story (Reutzel, 1985). Maps can also decipher a landscape or story by “fill[ing] in the blanks” and piecing the story together (Caquard, 2013: 136). In addition to being used as a supplement to the story, maps have also been explored as primary forms of storytelling in combination with the narrative similar to film and literature (Caquard, 2014).

Charles Minard in his graphic representation of *Napoleon’s March to Moscow* combined stories, experience, and mapping with flow lines denoting death and a line graph displaying freezing temperatures. By connecting death to temperature, highlighting experience, and de-emphasizing the physical landscape, Minard’s map depicts the reality and stories of Napoleon’s March in a way that effectively connects the viewer to the map (Tufte, 1983).

In his article titled “The Atlas of Narrative Form,” Denis Wood (1987) argues for the inclusion of cartography into the broader realm of representation and visual expression such as film, literature, art, and storytelling. Instead of viewing the atlas as a means of compilation and convenience, Wood views it as a narrative form. The arrangement of maps within an atlas extends the meaning of the map beyond page and places it in the broader context of a larger story. In this way, Wood argues that maps have the ability, similar to film and literature, to tell a

story and spark imagination and so should be acknowledged as text, and an expressive form of storytelling (Wood, 1987).

Critical cartography has also had a role “envisioning maps as a compelling form of storytelling,” eventually leading to the *story map* (Caquard, 2011: 136; Jacob, 1992; MacFarlane, 2007). Critical perspectives in cartography question the power dynamics in maps and deconstruct the metanarratives and stories hidden within the map. The *story map*, defined by Robert MacFarlane, is different than the grid map in that the grid map is solely a base map or reference for spatial location and therefore, lacks emotion. The story map receives its shape through experience and place (MacFarlane, 2007).

Kwan explores MacFarlane’s concept utilizing GIS and 3D visualization to depict the experiences of Muslim women in the United States post-September 11. The spatial dimension of the women’s stories is represented on the x-axis of the map and the temporal dimension on the y-axis. Color conveys a third dimension of emotion; for example, the use of red relates to feelings of fear and uneasiness.

Christian Nold approaches the story map from the perspective of emotion as quantitative information. Participants in Nold’s project, *Bio Mapping*, wore a device consisting of a GPS unit and biometric sensor calculating the Galvanic Skin Response as they walked around the city. Nold mapped the routes and their physiological reactions or emotions with this device, linking embodied experience to the map and telling a story beyond the grid map (Nold, 2009).

Narrative mapping is another approach to mapping stories that is perhaps more holistic. Chatman defines narrative as the combination of story and discourse (1978). Margaret Pearce (2008) writes, “narrative is shaped by temporality” and is “created through specific techniques, including, but not limited to, focalization, pacing, and closure.” In *Mapping Champlain’s*

*Travels*, Pearce and Michael Hermann (2010) mapped multiple voices with sequential insets to recount several narratives and stories.

Another mapping approach, the Holocaust Geographies project, is a collaborative effort between historians, art historians, geographers, and historical geographers to integrate spatial analysis and visualization into Holocaust research (USHMM, 2014). While the project explores the vast spatiality of Holocaust events, the exploration of traumatic stories and experience is particularly relevant. For example, *Landscapes of Experience* is a case study that examines methods of mapping and visualization to “explore the spatial, temporal, and experiential dimensions of the evacuations of...Jewish and non-Jewish inmates from Auschwitz” (USHMM, 2014).

While stories have historically been mapped over time in print, the development of online mapping or Web 2.0 has had a dramatic effect on the proliferation of story maps. Online, open source mapping tools such as MapBox have reshaped mapping and storytelling by making maps freely available to those with Internet access. Corporate online mapping companies such as Google or ESRI have responded by developing their own free applications such as Google Maps (My Maps), Google Earth, Microsoft (Connections), ArcExplorer, and ArcGIS Online (ESRI Story Maps). These corporations have also made their application programming interfaces (APIs) available for map mashups, the combination of geographic data from one source with a base map from a corporate online map such as Google, Yahoo, or Bing (Crampton, 2008). These online advancements democratize mapping and allow individuals and groups to map their own stories in an online, interactive environment (Caquard, 2011).

ESRI Story Maps promotes itself as a means of “organizing and presenting information... to tell the story of a place, event, issue, trend or pattern” by combining interactive maps with

multimedia content (ESRI, 2014). These technological capabilities have “vastly expanded the potential of maps to weave narratives” and tell stories (ESRI, 2012). Story Maps provides user-friendly templates and instructions that allow nontechnical audiences, GIS professionals, and media outlets such as the *Atlantic* to upload their stories via maps, text, images, and videos to an interactive, online environment. Similar applications such as StoryMapJS produced by Northwestern University’s Knight Lab have exploded in use on the web and are advertised as “free tool[s] to help you tell stories on the web” (<http://storymap.knightlab.com/>).

## Summary and conclusion

Borders, feminist and critical perspectives, and mapping stories provide a unique framework to analyze maps produced by Western media and map the collected stories of Syrian refugee border crossings. Utilizing this framework, I will explore the traditional and non-traditional borders that Syrian refugees encounter.

Traditional borders as experienced, performed, and dynamic international boundaries, and non-traditional borders such as embodied, socio-spatial boundaries are particularly relevant to my project as I am interested in identifying and mapping *both* border types. Traditional borders are often conceptualized as rigid and homogenous containers of the state and the cartographic representations of these borders are similarly *trapped* in this traditional approach. Critical geographers and cartographers such as Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002), Guidice and Giubilaro (2015), and Moore and Perdue (2015), re-envision borders through experience and performance and re-visualize border symbolization. Like John Agnew (1994 and 2009), these scholars deconstruct borders away from static, strict, and uniform representation towards messy, subjective border experiences.



These traditional borders are typically depicted as homogenous line symbols on a map. Although lines and sometime points are convenient symbolization choices, Rumford (2006) and Newman (2011) are quick to point out that borders have their own spatiality and dimensions. Within border areas, individuals can be placed on or in the border experiencing life in-between boundaries.

Unlike traditional borders, non-traditional borders are less visible on the landscape and are rarely mapped. The failure to recognize non-traditional borders is a means of silencing the individuals who experience them. Therefore, the exploration, understanding, and cartographic translation (words to symbols) of non-traditional borders as contact spaces and socio-spatial limits are important aspects of this study, and crucial to minimize state-centric thinking and expand the map beyond traditional border symbolization.

A critical and feminist perspective consisting of vision, reflexivity, the body, intersectionality, and transformation is my lens to analyze and critique maps produced by Western media. Because mapping is a highly visual form of communication, critical, feminist perspectives on vision and the gaze are central concepts in this analysis.

Understanding *reflexivity* is important as a mode of recognizing positionality and potential bias within the context of my research. Recognizing *intersectionality* and *connected difference* is relevant when the research spans more than one individual, as experience may be complex and varied between participants. Understanding these connections and complexities will prevent vast generalizations and promote the representation of subjective experience. In contrast, connected difference fosters connections across time and space, offering a different way to aggregate experience. Intersectionality and connected difference directly apply to map scale,

where intersectionality supports individual, narrative mapping and connected difference supports careful, aggregated categorization and classification.

Even without a clear definition, the body is central to critical, feminist theory. Feminist scholars avoid objectifying and aggregating techniques by engaging with bodily research. Related research examines subjective experiences, perspectives, feelings, positionality, and identities within a single body. An understanding of approaches to the body is crucial to mapping it. In addition, mapping the body calls for a re-examination of the aggregating techniques that traditionally render the body invisible or unmapped.

Lastly, *transformation* serves as a means to re-define social constructions such as borders and Western mapping practices. Although they are not recognized as directly linked to feminist transformative perspectives, Soja's thirdspace and the work of Pearce and Kwan all fall within this realm. A transformative approach to mapping re-thinks the map, its symbols, and its message in relationship to power, visibility, and invisibility.

The increasing interest in story maps over the last few decades is also relevant. Conventionally, as seen in the vast promotion of online *story map* applications, story maps simply locate and reference particular places with text, images, video, and sound, while often neglecting the emotive portion of experience. The critical turn in cartography, however, is particularly relevant because of its shift towards experiential and narrative mapping. Several cartographers such as Kwan, Pearce, Minard, Nold, and the Holocaust Project have approached story mapping from this critical perspective and offer useful techniques to reveal narrative and experience.

In summary, a critical, feminist lens consisting of vision, reflexivity, the body, intersectionality, and transformation guides my critique, analysis, and mapping of Syrian refugee

border crossings. With this lens, I navigate experiences of traditional and non-traditional borders and border crossings through mapping, expanding the literature on story mapping with a new narrative technique.

## CHAPTER 4: Discourse and content analysis of Western media mapping practices

In this section, I present a discourse and visual content analysis of maps produced by an array of Western map publishers. The research question guiding this section is: **How are Syrian refugees' experiences of crossing borders conveyed in words, images, and maps for Western audiences?** The goal is to survey contemporary mapping practices in relationship to story scale, generalization, and cartographic techniques. I specifically survey and analyze contemporary mapping techniques such as the symbolization of borders and refugees, thematic mapping, terrain representation, perspective, and scale. In this analysis, I refer to scale or *story scale* as it relates to the number of individuals depicted in the map or story. Individual scale relates to one individual's story and aggregated scale relates to a group's generalized story. For example, some conventional Western maps often depict refugees as an aggregated group using thematic maps, classification schemes, charts, graphs, or totaled raw numbers. In contrast, other maps are customized to depict one person's experiences, and general reference maps may highlight specific locations but disregard the story scale altogether. I also examine the use of generalization techniques such as aggregation and selection as they relate to story scale.

### Background: The theoretical foundations of discourse analysis and content analysis

Visual methods and visual analysis are extremely important as society increasingly interacts with and is embedded with imagery. Imagery and maps from newspapers, magazines, social media, and the Internet construct how the world is viewed and interpreted. Gillian Rose writes:

These images are never transparent windows onto the world. They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways; they represent it (Rose, 2012: 2).

With that, it is important to understand the distinction between vision and visibility. Vision directly relates to the physiological capacity of the eye to see, whereas, visibility addresses how the world is constructed, represented, and interpreted through imagery. Visibility uncouples what is seen and reveals what is unseen or silent (Rose, 2012: 2). Rose (2012: 210) suggests many visual methodologies—compositional interpretation, semiology, psychoanalysis, discourse analysis, participant observation—that address culture and representation through a visual lens. In this thesis, I focus on discourse analysis and content analysis.

### Discourse analysis

Michel Foucault, a French philosopher, is considered the grandfather of discourse theory, which reveals and describes the intersections of power and knowledge to better understand how the world is shaped and interpreted (Yapa, 2010; Waite, 2010; Rose, 2012). Gillian Rose (2012: 190) defines discourse as “particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it.” This approach not only examines how knowledge is shaped but also how knowledge and understanding become naturalized and unquestioned (Waite, 2010). The relationship between power and knowledge is important because this relationship continuously shapes ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ (Rose, 2012). Power directly reinforces knowledge systems and vice versa.

To understand the dynamic of discourse, *discursive structures* must be critically examined. Discursive structures are “unwritten conventions that operate to produce some kind of authoritative account of the world” whether it be from power-laden institutions or Western mapping techniques (Waite, 2005: 168). Discursive structures such as maps fix knowledge about the world in time and space.

How does a researcher begin to uncover discursive structures and reveal power and knowledge built into our understanding of the world? The answer is discourse analysis. Developed in stride with the critical turn in the social sciences, discourse analysis is a useful geographic method that can be applied across mixed media such as text, imagery, video, interviews, and maps. This breadth of material applicability is called intertextuality (Rose, 2012). Unfortunately, Foucault did not provide a clearly defined method. Instead, Gordon Waitt (2010: 219) declares discourse analysis as an “art” and Jonathon Potter (1996:140) a “craft skill.” With no clear definition, the primary goal of discourse analysis is to deconstruct particular knowledge systems that dominate understandings of the world and reveal the silencing of alternative knowledge systems (Waitt, 2010: 218).

Rose (2012) provides a starting point with loosely defined strategies for conducting discourse analysis. Waitt (2010: 220) summarizes these key strategies and guidelines as follows:

1. Choose source materials or texts that are intertextual, justified, and content rich
2. Be reflexive
3. Familiarize and think critically about the social context of your texts
4. Code your text for content analysis and repeat coding
5. Investigate your texts for discursive structures
6. Record inconsistencies within your texts
7. Uncover the silences

Reflexivity—Rose’s Step 2—is just as important in discourse analysis as it is within a feminist theoretic lens. Objectivity is impossible when it comes to analyzing discourse because “all knowledge is socially constituted” (Waitt, 2010: 225). Instead, Waitt (2010) and Rose (1997) call on researchers to be reflexive and “locate” themselves within the project by recognizing any potential subjectivity. Waitt (2010) stresses the importance of a self-critical positionality statement acknowledging preconceived notions, embodied knowledge, and any changes in

positionality throughout the research. Rose (1997) counters, however, that it may be impossible to ever fully locate oneself in a research project.

Rose (2001: 157) says, “absences are as productive as explicit naming; invisibility can have just as powerful effects as visibility.” In this case, invisibility directly relates to silence and discourse analysis aims to uncover these silences by understanding background and contextual information as well as recognizing discursive structures at play. One advantage of discourse analysis in mapping is that it uncovers silences and gives voice to underrepresented individuals or groups.

As a type of discursive structure, maps can also silence. John Brian Harley (1989: 3) uncovered and discussed the relationship between power and “the particular knowledge encoded in maps and atlases.” Power and knowledge in cartography may manifest in deliberate or non-deliberate acts that create silences or hidden agendas within the map, products of the social and cultural context that encompasses the mapmaker. Harley carefully deconstructed cartographic techniques and uncovered social inequality in European maps as follows:

Cartography deploys its vocabulary accordingly so that it embodies a systematic social inequality. The distinctions of class and power are engineered, reified, and legitimated in the map... those who have strength in the world shall be added strength in the map. Using all the tricks of cartographic trade—size of symbol, thickness of line, height of lettering, hatching and shading, the addition of color—we can trace this reinforcing tendency in innumerable European maps (Harley, 1989: 7).

Maps inherently lie (Monmonier, 1991). The cartographic tricks mentioned above along with symbolization, generalization, classification, and the creation of hierarchies enable silencing and hidden lies (Harley, 1989; Monmonier, 1991). A critical examination of maps through discourse analysis provides a more transparent window to illuminate the ways in which maps silence.

Yapa (2010: 767) extends the discussion of discourse analysis and discourse theory to selection and aggregation. Objects, for example, are defined by an infinite number of

descriptions or attributes. Selection is the mechanism from which we pick and choose which attributes can and should be applied to a particular object. Discourse and knowledge are built based on the selection of given attributes. In the selection process, some attributes are inevitably ignored or silenced. Selection of what is deemed important is “shaped by social forces and certainly cast doubt on the rational scientific claim to objective knowledge free from discourse” (Yapa, 2010: 768).

Aggregation is another useful organizational tool that reduces or condenses the multiple meanings of objects to a single meaning. Yapa (2010: 768) concludes that discourse analysis “does not demand that we abandon such aggregate concepts but only that we be aware of aggregation and its implications” in terms of knowledge, power, and silencing.

Selection and aggregation are also key principles applied to cartography and generalization techniques. Slocum et al. (2009: 97) defines generalization as “the process of reducing the information content of maps because of scale change, map purpose, intended audience, and/or technical constraints.” *Selection* (selecting features deemed relevant) and *aggregation* (collapsing multiple features into one feature) are two generalization techniques used by cartographers to distort reality. Revealing selection and aggregation techniques in maps and more broadly, in discursive structures is an important avenue of inquiry when conducting a discourse analysis.

### Content analysis and coding

Content analysis is an iterative process of coding or categorizing qualitative data and calculating the frequency of particular codes to reveal commonality or dissimilarity within data; at a deeper level, content analysis reveals ingrained themes (Rose, 2012; Cope, 2010).

Historically, content analysis has been applied to textual materials for organization, analysis, and



interpretation. Traditional textual content analysis has been performed on headlines in newspapers, for example, to understand the changes in content over time (Krippendorff, 1989).

Since the “cultural turn” in the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s, content analysis has increased in usage and has expanded the analysis of maps, photographs, videos, and infographics. In geography, Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins’ (1993) exploration of the representation of non-Western peoples in *National Geographic Magazine* imagery is a fundamental study for understanding the application of content analysis to visual materials. Ian Muehlenhaus (2010 and 2011) applied visual content analysis to maps in his dissertation to examine the manipulation of political maps, and he also examined changes in thematic mapping in *Goode’s World Atlas* over time in a second publication. Last, Slocum and Kessler (2011) applied a content analysis to uncover changes in map design in two reputable geographic journals in the twentieth century.

Content analysis can be both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative content analysis is useful for a large amount of source materials because it reduces data to particular themes sought by the research question (Cope, 2010: 283-284). A qualitative approach to content analysis critically examines analytic codes and is concerned with drawing relationships between images as opposed to drawing statistical results. Rose (2012: 91-92) notes that Lutz and Collins (1993) merge quantitative and qualitative content analysis by combining both surficial and theoretical codes about “power, race, and history.”

Rose (2012: 87-101) breaks content analysis into four steps: finding images, devising categories for coding, coding images, and analyzing the results. Finding source imagery or source materials is heavily driven by the research question at hand. The goal is to find images that are relevant, representative, and rich. It is also important to be able to justify image and

source selection as well as establish the credibility of that selection through reflexivity and transparency (Waite, 2010).

A key component to finding imagery is the sampling method. Rose suggests four sampling methods, including random, stratified, systematic, and cluster (2012: 89). A sound sampling method is important to the replicability of the research project. Although random sampling would be ideal, Muehlenhaus recognizes that a perfect sampling method is not always conceivable and depends on the research question. In such a case, convenience sampling or selective sampling is acceptable as long as the researcher justifies this research decision and acknowledges its limitations (Muehlenhaus, 2011: 11-12).

Coding is the core of content analysis and begins with the development of codes or categories that will be used to analyze images. Rose (2012: 91) presents three key “requirements” for coding development: codes are exhaustive (categories should encompass the full image), codes are exclusive (categories should not overlap), and codes are enlightening (categories should be purposeful). Coding is traditionally divided into two categories: descriptive and analytical. Descriptive coding explores superficial elements and content of an image. For example, a descriptive code may examine the “who, what, when, where” details of an image. Analytical coding relates to deeper, hidden themes that may not be directly visible within an image. Analytical coding is driven by relevant literature and theory surrounding the research question (Rose, 2012: 90-91).

The third step in a content analysis is the actual coding. Again, coding is an iterative process capable of continuing indefinitely. Muehlenhaus (2011: 17) advises, “consistency and concentration are fundamental components to a successful coding.” Cope (2010) suggests an initial survey of images or a first round to record repetitive elements or themes. The initial

survey can help develop or eliminate coding categories. A second (and third and fourth) round of coding are often necessary. The frequency of the codes can be recorded using MS Excel or by hand (Muehlenhaus, 2011: 17).

Analysis begins by tallying the frequency of codes as they apply to each image. From totaled counts or frequency counts, simple statistics such as percentages can then be performed to normalize the data. Furthermore, cross-tabulation and relationship testing can also be applied for further analysis (Muehlenhaus, 2011: 19).

Content analysis as applied to maps is beneficial for a number of reasons:

1. Counts and measures the number of particular data and graphic elements found on a multitude of maps for comparison by publisher
2. Allows for the relatively quick analysis of a large sample of maps simultaneously
3. Allows for the quantitative comparison of different compositional traits among maps in a sample
4. Allows us to quantitatively measure and compare data longitudinally (Muehlenhaus, 2011: 8)

On the other hand, content analysis has its limitations. For example, content analysis cannot answer all questions related to maps. In such a case, other visual methods previously mentioned may be more appropriate. In addition, content analysis focuses on just that, content or composition, neglecting the site of production (the cartographer and his or her intent) and the site of audiencing (map readers and subjective map interpretation) (Rose, 2012: 86).

### **Analytical methods applied to this study**

To begin my analysis, I appraised and selected Western mapping publication sources based on four requirements: sources are intertextual, sources are multi-scalar, sources are justified, and maps are content rich (Waite, 2010: 220-223). Preliminary research and familiarity with Western mapping sources aided this process. I selected nine final sources including *The*

*New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, BBC, *National Geographic Magazine*, UNHCR, HIU, *MapAction*, *Humanitarian Tracker*, and *Syria Deeply*.

A consistent sampling method such as random, stratified, systematic, and cluster suggested by Gillian Rose (2012: 89) proved to be difficult given the breadth of my sources. For example, maps were easily accessible from the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* image search engines by using the search term “Syrian refugees.” The image search engines provided access to a multitude of maps and hyperlinks to their associated articles. In contrast, maps produced by HIU were organized by date for easy download. HIU provides a one-stop shop for a series of up-to-date refugee reports. *National Geographic Magazine* does not have a large number of published maps related to Syrian refugees. Three maps were collected from two special reports. Although not rich in number, the *National Geographic Magazine* maps provide a rich cartographic display in combination with riveting photojournalism and journalism. Because of these differences, map collection was impossible to standardize. I relied instead on a convenience or selective sampling method (Muehlenhaus, 2011: 11-12).

With a convenience sampling method, I collected a total of 86 maps. See Table 1 for a complete list of sampling methods used and number of maps collected per source. Each map was downloaded and saved with respect to a unique identifier. The unique identifier was used to index each map in an Excel spreadsheet. The website URL, the name of the article, the date of publication, and special notes were recorded in this spreadsheet.

Source	Collection method	Number of maps
<i>The New York Times</i>	Image search engine. Search term: “Syrian refugee.” All maps were downloaded and saved.	22
<i>The Washington Post</i>	Image search engine. Search term: “Syrian refugee.” All maps were downloaded and saved.	12
<i>National Geographic</i>	Two featured articles.	3

<i>Magazine</i>		
BBC	Special section, <i>Mapping Conflict</i> , as part of <i>Syria Background</i> .	6
<i>Humanitarian Tracker</i>	<i>Syria Tracker</i> is one crowdsourced map displaying up-to-date reports.	1
<i>Syria Deeply</i>	One interactive map.	1
HIU	Maps filed under Middle East products and listed by date.	18
<i>MapAction</i>	Map search on relief.net.	4
UNHCR	Map search on relief.net.	19

Table 1: Collection method and number of maps by source

Next, I developed preliminary codes based on my research questions. Border and refugee symbolization as well as story scale were obvious code choices. I then went through every map, wrote down keywords related to *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and took notes based on my observations. I organized keywords such as refugee, internally displaced persons, choropleth, point symbols, color of symbols, interactive, static, perspective, movement, and terrain into categories.

Before coding, I took descriptive and observational notes for each map. This allowed me to “get to know” the map before I applied the codes. Next, I used my coding categories as a giant checklist. If the code (example: *choropleth*) was present in the map, the map received a one in that category. If the code wasn’t present, the map received a zero. The ones and zeros were then tallied to determine the frequency of each code. I tallied the codes and calculated percentages of each code for all of my map sources and then calculated frequency separately by source. Some maps were supplements to written articles and some were standalone maps or reports. If the map was linked to an article, I also read through the article and took descriptive and observational notes.

The goal of my discourse and visual content analysis was to review maps published by the West that depict the Syrian crisis, refugees, and borders. I documented and analyzed the mapping techniques such as the symbolization of borders and refugees as well as perspective and story scale. I coded 86 maps using 46 different descriptive and analytic codes. The frequency of each code as a percentage is recorded in Appendix A. I further analyzed the cartographic techniques used in two in-depth case studies to better understand the use of symbolization and generalization as silencing mechanisms. I divided my results from my content and discourse analysis into four sections: case studies, results by source, overall results, and border symbolization.

## Results and discussion

### Case Study: National Geographic Magazine: “Fleeing Terror, Finding Refuge”

Throngs of Syrians desperately wait behind a barbed wire fence at the Syria’s border with Turkey. Two men—ethnic Kurds, one young and one old—reach through the barbed wire towards water and safety (Figure 24). This image is one of four opening spreads in *National Geographic*



Figure 24: Ethnic Kurds awaiting passage at the Syrian-Turkish border. [Photo]. Stanmeyer, J. (2015). *Fleeing Terror, Finding Refuge. National Geographic Magazine*, 168-198.

*Magazine's* article titled, "Fleeing Terror, Finding Refuge" (Salopek, 2015). An online version is available here: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/syrian-refugees/salopek-text>. The next pages show blurred figures crossing the Syrian-Turkish border at night carrying a fraction of their personal belongings, a young boy in tears, and a cloud of swirling dust and debris from thousands of Syrians trampling across fields during their journey. The riveting photography taken by John Stanmeyer accompanies this piece written by Paul Salopek as part of the *Out of Eden Walk* series (2015). *Out of Eden Walk* documents Salopek's seven-year journey on foot tracing the spread of the human species. This portion of Salopek's journey intersects the mass migration of Syrians fleeing violence.

The textual coverage of this article straddles two narratives: an archeological dig of Oylum—a historic site documenting nine human eras—and the plight of millions of displaced Syrians. The Syrian story begins on foot "in the attitude of powerlessness" when crossing the border (Salopek, 2015: 56). Salopek (2015: 56) describes this transit:

You exit one life and enter another. You walk through a cut border fence into statelessness, vulnerability, dependency, and invisibility. You become a refugee.

Salopek connects himself and his journey to Syrians beginning their journey on foot but simultaneously separates himself and diminishes the agency of the individual refugees in this statement and in related imagery. In a photo, Salopek appears determined and stoic while traversing on foot in a snapshot taken in eastern Turkey. This photo separates Salopek from the powerless, vulnerable, and dependent images of Syrians. Women in particular are documented as powerless in this article as "Syria's women suffer their wars alone, in silence, and in alien lands" (Salopek, 2015: 58).

Amidst the textual and photographic coverage of Salopek's journey is a map titled "A Walk Into Hardship" along with two locator maps at small- and medium-scales. An adapted

online version is available here: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/syrian-refugees/border-map>. The small-scale map shows Salopek's planned route, his completed route so far, and an inset box. Countries are amalgamated into a nearly contiguous continent. The medium-scale map shows an enlarged segment of the first, emphasizing Syria with a prominent, solid black border and the total number of refugees abroad calculated for each neighboring country. The two reference maps build the story before merging into the large-scale, central map. A color palette used across all three maps consisting of beiges, browns, and blues elegantly drapes over an elevated terrain representation. In contrast to this subdued color scheme and base map is a stark red line that reaches the extent of the page. This line is the primary thematic feature across all three maps. The red line that snakes through the Amanos Mountains is Salopek's route through "one of the largest forced migrations in the world" (Salopek, 2015: 58-59).

To a lesser extent, the map highlights four additional features: Syrian refugee camps, populated areas with refugee presence, border crossings points, and areas of conflict and displacement. Syrian refugee camps are depicted as points in a saturated blue, mimetic tent symbol. Border crossing points are symbolized as circles with black fill, white outline, and a white "x" through the middle. Areas populated with refugees are illustrated in a transparent, desaturated blue and areas of conflict and displacement within Syria are represented in a transparent brown. The border between Syria and Turkey is symbolized as a continuous black line feature with a white outline. Although important features in Syrian stories and the magazine's featured article, these features are recessed in comparison to Salopek's red route.

Refugees are depicted as point and area symbols. Point symbols conventionally reduce areas to point features. In this map, point symbols also reduce people. For example, the 38,000



Syrians in Kilis 1 and Kilis 2 camps are collapsed into two points. In addition, the medium-scale reference map totals the number of refugees in each host country into one aggregated number. For example, 1,165,000 Syrians have sought refuge in Turkey. The sheer number is wrenching but it also depletes the experiences of individuals. Refugees are also shown in another dimension: areas. The blue area symbols amalgamate and approximate the locations of refugees. The area symbol is static when refugee movement is in fact continuous. This is also true for areas of conflict and displacement. These conventional cartographic techniques render Syrian refugees dispersed and invisible.

The solid line between Syria and Turkey is not peculiar; solid lines are convenient border representations. It's depiction as a continuous, static line, however, negates the fluidity of that border. The border-crossing symbol marked with an "x" is a mimetic symbol of restriction and control. Given the solid line and point symbol, the border appears impenetrable, un-experienced, and permanent.

Type is used in the central map to provide a written narrative and to guide the viewer's eye around the page. The introductory text emphasizes Salopek's route and introduces the Syrian civil war and the extent of displacement. The remaining text is rooted in tallied numbers such as number of displaced Syrians in Turkey and place-based information such as the border crossings near the town of Mursitpinar. An underwritten theme is Turkey's hospitality and burden taking in the "human tide" of Syrians (Salopek, 2015: 58-29). Serif and san-serif typefaces are also used to label thematic features as well as references features.

The voices of individual refugees are routinely utilized in the accompanied article. For example, a Syrian woman displaced in Turkey named Mona notes "Nobody protects you. You get harassed constantly... Where can I go?" (Salopek, 2015: 58, 62). Mona's desperation and cry

for help is not heard in the map. Mona's voice and the voices of other Syrians are not included in the maps' written narrative. Their voices are silenced as the author's narrative prevails.

The map is inconsistent with the textual and photographic coverage presented in the main article. The cartographic coverage emphasizes Salopek's journey and diminishes the stories of Syrians. The red line of Salopek's route is the focal point of the central map whereas Syrians are grouped into points and areas, totaled into large sums, and restricted by borders. Syrian stories are downplayed and only represented because of their significant numbers

### Case Study: The Washington Post: "Refuge"

Music plays and animated pictorial figures representing Syrian refugees walk and run across the computer screen (available here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/story/refuge/>). The walkers and runners mosaic into a portrait of a young girl as "Refuge: 18 Stories from the Syrian Exodus" appears in writing on the page, similar to the opening credit of a movie. Below are the color portraits of 18 individuals that have been affected by the Syrian crisis. A byline accompanies individual story, including *Stitching a Life Together*, *Born into Exile*, *Downwardly Mobile*, *A Child Goes to Work*, and *Sniper Victim*. None of which are terribly optimistic.

These stories are part of *The Washington Post* article "Refuge" written by Kevin Sullivan and published in October 2013. The article uses a mixed media approach that includes photography, video, interactive graphics, text, testimonials, and maps to understand the size and complexity of the crisis through a variety of individual stories. A map accompanies each story documented in Sullivan's piece. The maps provide a spatial reference for each story including place names that are of importance and any movement within Syria or across borders to Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey (Sullivan, 2013).

Dania Amroosh is 7-years-old (available here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/03/refuge-stories-from-the-syrian-exodus/>). Two photographs (Figure 26) introduce her story: a portrait of Dania with a noticeable scar across her nose and an aerial perspective photograph of Dania laying on a hospital bed displaying her stomach freshly stitched together and shrapnel wounds covering her legs. Dania's life completely changed when a bomb went off near her home killing several family members. Her father, Mohammed Amroosh, rushed her to the nearest hospital and was advised to take her to Turkey by ambulance. Dania and her family now live in Turkey at the Kilis State Hospital awaiting recovery. In the online article, her father says, "This is our new home" (Sullivan, 2013).

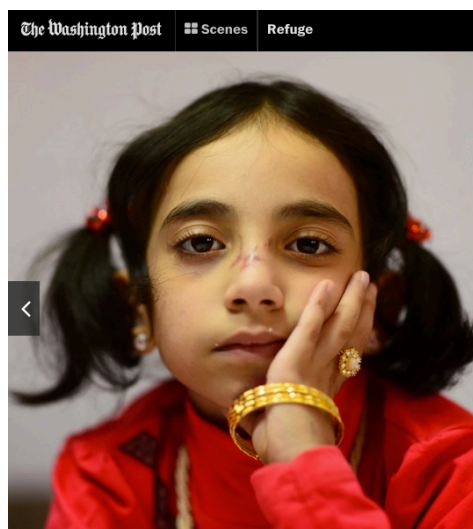


Figure 26: A portrait of Dania. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/03/refuge-stories-from-the-syrian-exodus/>

The article navigates between Dania's story and the Syrian crisis as a whole. A short video provides context to the Syrian crisis beginning at the start of the revolution. The video uses images and maps to show the historic displacement of refugees in the region as well as the plight specific to Syrians since 2011. The textual coverage discusses the causalities of war, tensions in

host communities, and the preparation of potentially permanent refugee camps. An infographic displays the number of Syrians per host country differentiated by color and divided by sex. Each pictorial human figure represents 1,000 Syrians abroad. Total aggregated numbers of refugees are also displayed by country and sex. This graphic vividly portrays the extent of the crisis and provides a human dimension through the use of pictorial figures. A large quote centered in the text says, “When the Palestinians came in 1948, we thought they would stay for a couple of weeks” which refers to Lebanon’s hesitancy in building more camps, this time for displaced Syrians (Sullivan, 2013).

Dania’s story is documented through photographs and a video. In the video, Dania shyly stares into the camera and doesn’t speak. In her Hello Kitty shirt, she appears to be an average 7-year-old. In reality, her life is forever changed.

A map also accompanies her story (Figure 27). The map consists of a grey base map at the country level where prominent towns, capitals, and hydrology are referenced for context.



Figure 27: Danish Amroosh’s journey from Syria to a hospital in Turkey. [Map]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/03/refuge-stories-from-the-syrian-exodus/>

Syria is highlighted in a darker shade of grey with a bold and capitalized label. Syria’s borders are illustrated in a darker, dashed line. Dania’s story comes to the forefront in red. Aleppo, her

city of origin and Kilis Hospital where she now resides with her family are emphasized. A red flow line connects the two place-names specific to her story in a direct, unhindered straight line.

Another segment (available here: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/02/stitching-a-life/>) tells the story of Mouneer Kalthoum and his family as they have been displaced several times to avoid heavy bombing. Mouneer left his pregnant wife and children in Syria and fled to Istanbul, Turkey to find a job and prepare a new life. Trained as an electrical engineer, Mouneer now works in a sewing factory. Living on \$350 a month, Mouneer and 10 family members live in a tiny apartment barely making ends meet.

Three photographs supplement his story: a stoic individual portrait, a picture of Mouneer's sewing work station, and a family photo with two smiling curious young children in the foreground. A 23-second video shows Mouneer at work surrounded by shelves of yarn. Although he doesn't speak during the video, Mouneer stares into the camera between drags of a cigarette as music plays in the background. In the body of the article, he says, "I came here for my children's future. I started from zero, and I can start again from zero" (Sullivan, 2013).

A map (Figure 28) provides context and reference to Mouneer's story. Similar to the



Figure 28: Mouneer Kalthoum's journey from Syria to Turkey. [Map]. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved December 1, 2014, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/syrian-refugees/2013/12/02/stitching-a-life/>

map in Dania's story, the map employs a simple grey base map displaying the region by country. Countries, Turkey's capital Ankara, and the Mediterranean Sea are labeled. Syria is outlined and highlighted. Syria's country label is written in a large, bold, and capitalized letters. Syria's border contrasts other nation-state borders with a dark, dashed line. Place names from Mourneer's story are called to the forefront in red. Aleppo, his city of origin, and Istanbul, where he currently resides, are depicted as red circles. A red flow line connects these two reference locations and flows easily across the black dashed border to show his movement from one location to the other.

Sixteen additional stories accompany "Refuge" in a similar way with images, graphics, videos, interviews, and maps. While the images, graphics, videos, and interviews are differentiated by each story, the maps remain all too familiar. The symbolization is consistent and does not change between stories; the individual is lost. The cartographic template comprising simple grey base maps, a focus on Syria, red points depicting places names, and red flow lines show commonality between stories but do not show variation between experiences. The maps lag behind the realities expressed in the other mediums of storytelling; the map as discourse is silenced.

## Results by source

All of the maps produced by the *New York Times* accompany at least one news article, and some maps accompany more than one article. Nearly 70 percent of the maps are general reference maps (an as seen in Figure 29). Figure 30 accompanies an article titled *As Syrian Refugees Develop Roots, Jordan Grows Wary* (2013). The article highlights increasing tensions due to housing, employment, and resource shortages within host countries as Syrians flood into Jordan. In this story, the map is used as a point of reference because it highlights Syria and Jordan, cities near the border, and Zaatari refugee camp. Refugees are indirectly represented and are collapsed into camp Zaatari's black, square point symbol.



Figure 29: General reference map of Syria and Jordan emphasizing Mafraq and Zaatari refugee camp. [Map]. *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/world/middleeast/as-syrian-refugees-develop-roots-jordan-grows-wary.html>

Three *New York Times* maps are qualitative reference maps. One such example is Figure 30 where red points symbolize refugee camps and concentrations of IDPs. The shaded area in transparent red depicts areas of conflict. While this map does not aggregate individuals by classifying data, this map collapses camps and IDP locations to single dots and lists the totaled count of refugees by neighboring countries. The map's corresponding article compares the Syrian crisis to the Rwandan genocide using photography that is strikingly similar.

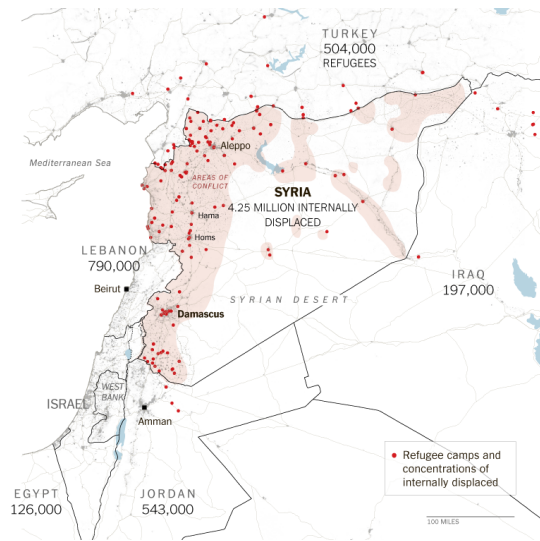


Figure 30: A map depicting the point locations of Syrian IDP and refugee camps and concentrations as well as areas of conflict. [Map]. *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/10/16/world/middleeast/syrian-refugee-crisis-photos.html>

Individual stories such as Raeda's, a Syrian teenager from Aleppo residing in Saidnayel, Lebanon, are also taken into account in *New York Times*. A photograph of Raeda and a general reference map that highlights Saidnayel (Figure 31) accompany her story—she was hit by shrapnel from an explosion in Aleppo and has permanently lost sight in one eye. The map locates her current location on a Cartesian grid but neglects her experiences of trauma and injury as well as her journey to Lebanon.





water, over-crowding, abandonment, and rescue. Locations of importance such as Damascus and the site of rescue are highlighted with red point symbols. None of the maps I collected from the *New York Times* incorporate a chart or graph into the layout.

The Humanitarian Information Unit (HIU) is unique in that its published maps are standalone reports produced monthly and sometimes weekly. 12 of 18 HIU maps show refugees at an aggregated story scale and six maps neglect to show story scale. One qualitative thematic map titled *Syria: Numbers and Locations of Refugees and IDPs* includes very specific information concerning refugees and IDPs by country and time. Aggregated information is displayed as raw count data in the left panel as well as in the bar chart and sector graph in the lower right corner. Overall, charts and graphs were consistently used by HIU in over 70 percent of the maps. HIU also illustrates areas of conflict and displacement, refugee camp locations, future camp locations, IDP sites, ISIS related population displacement, border crossings, cities, and hydrology. HIU aggregated refugees to a lesser extent using thematic mapping techniques; only two maps utilized proportional symbols and two maps utilized flow line maps to aggregate data.

Compared to the other map sources, UNHCR utilized the greatest proportion of thematic

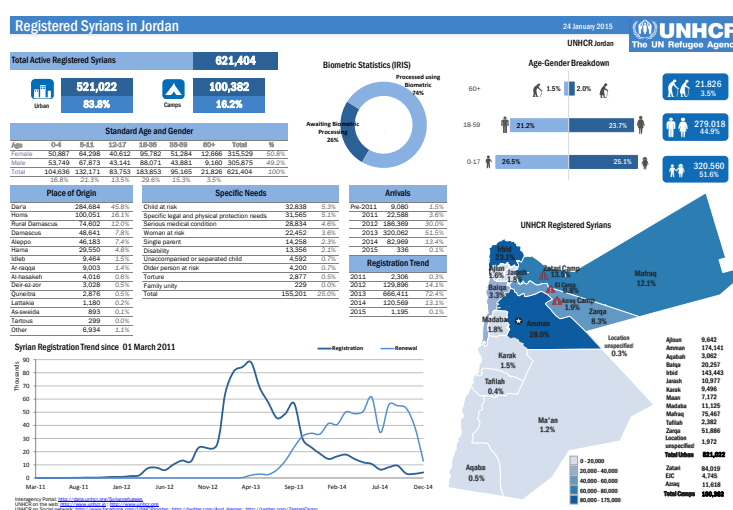


Figure 33: A thematic map showing concentrations of registered Syrians in Jordan as well as demographic information. [Map]. (2015). UNHCR. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/registered-syrians-jordan-24-january-2015>

map types to represent refugees as an aggregated group: ten choropleth maps, four proportional symbol maps, and one flow line map. The maps ranged in scale from large-scale maps of Zaartari refugee camp to smaller scale national and sub-national maps. One third of UNHCR's maps used charts and graphs to aggregate and visually communicate refugee displacement. In addition, UNHCR is the *only* map publisher from this study that differentiated Syrians by gender and age. Figure 33 uses a table to discern standardized age and gender. A bar chart and an infographic displaying raw numbers of adults, children, and elderly are also present within the layout.

A majority of the 12 maps collected from *The Washington Post* incorporate aggregated refugee data. However, there is one map that incorporated individual accounts within the map (Figure 34). Figure 34 uses callouts to reference six individual people. For example, Fathiya Ahmen left Aleppo in January 2013 and went to Gaziantep, Turkey. This map also incorporates aggregated numbers of Syrians that have left the country or are internally displaced in raw numbers and infographics within the map layout. Arrows and border symbolization illustrate the general movement of Syrians fleeing. In addition to Figure 35, many of the maps created by *The Washington Post* followed a template that includes identical layouts, symbolization, colors, and

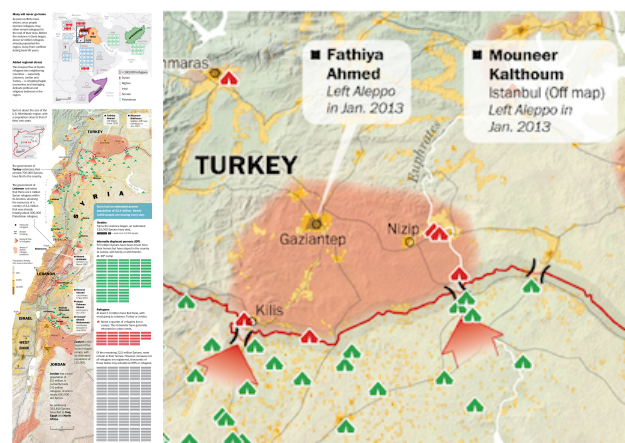


Figure 34: A map layout with two maps depicting the Syrian Crisis and an inset showing a conflict zone with Fathiya Ahmed's current location in Turkey. [Map]. (2013). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-map/2013/12/13/2b758d6a-645a-11e3-a373-0f9f2d1c2b61\\_graphic.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-map/2013/12/13/2b758d6a-645a-11e3-a373-0f9f2d1c2b61_graphic.html)

bar graphs as data was updated for each rendition.

BBC and MapAction both map the crisis using aggregated refugee data. BBC uses a variety of thematic map types in combination with bar charts to aggregate individuals (Figure 35). All four of the MapAction maps are thematic maps, predominantly choropleths. In Figure 36, MapAction combines a choropleth map showing refugee density of governorate outside of Syria with flow lines linking refugees to place of origin. In addition, Figure 36 also shows border-crossing points that are either open or restricted.

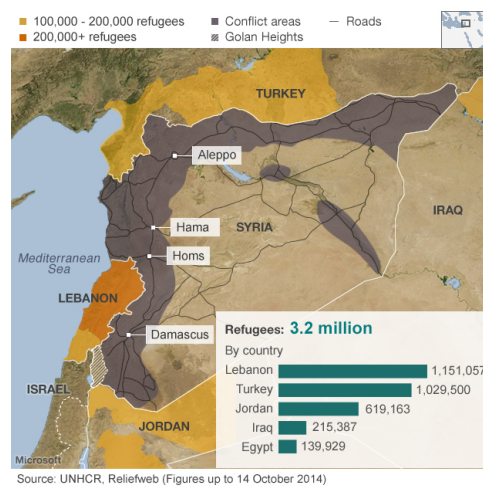


Figure 35: A choropleth map showing Syrian refugees in the region and conflict zones. [Map]. (2014). BBC. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29991161>

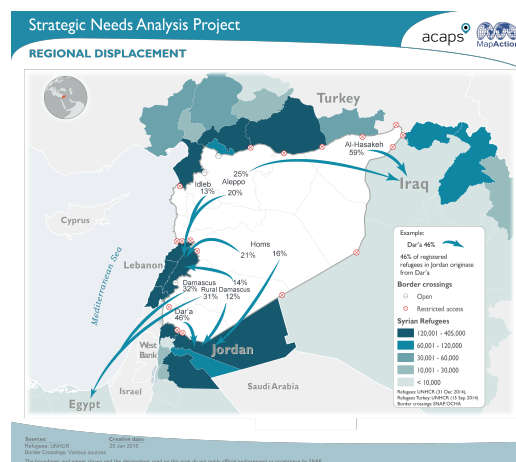


Figure 36: A bivariate map depicting regional displacement as a choropleth as well as a flow lines showing city of origin. [Map]. (2015). MapAction. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://reliefweb.int/map/syrian-arab-republic/syria-strategic-needs-analysis-project-regional-displacement-25-january>

*Syria Deeply* and *Syria Tracker* are both interactive, slippy maps—a map with zooming and panning capabilities similar to a Google map—that use proportional symbols to depict Syrian refugees, IDPs, and deaths. *Syria Deeply* shows two nominal categories: refugees in blue and casualties in red (Figure 37). *Syria Tracker* displays several nominal categories of crowd-sourced reporting; each category is differentiated by hue. For example, orange proportional symbols designate crowd-sourced reports tagged with “refugee” in Figure 38. The proportional circles display raw data associated with a specific area. The circles converge into larger circles as the viewer zooms out and the circles divide into smaller clusters with more specific locations as the viewer zooms in. At the street level in the city of Deir Ezzor, *Syria Deeply* shows a proportional circle that represents 6,952 casualties (Figure 39). These deaths, however, did not occur all at once on one street corner. Instead, the 6,952 casualties are still aggregated even at the most detailed scale. In contrast, *Syria Tracker*’s proportional symbols divide into individual reports.

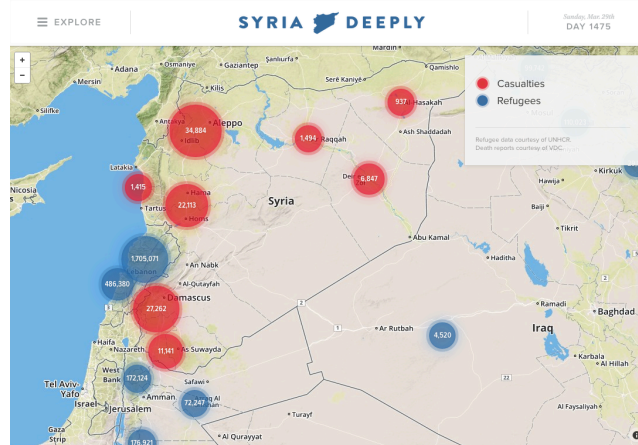


Figure 37: An interactive proportional circle map showing casualty and refugee concentrations. [Interactive map]. (2015). *Syria Deeply*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://v2.syriadeeply.org/map/>

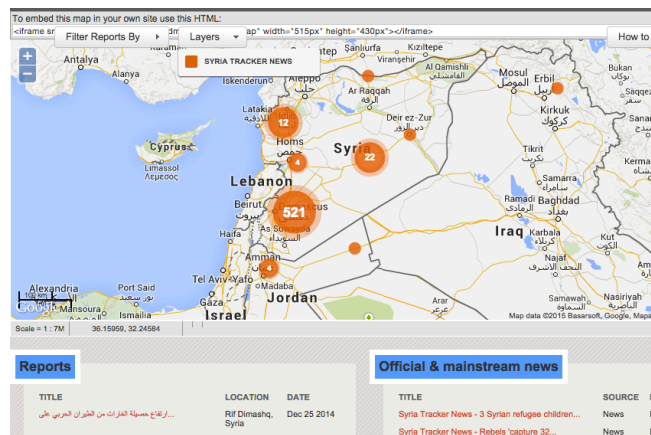


Figure 38: An interactive proportional circle map showing crowd sourced data related to refugee locations. [Interactive map]. (2015). *Syria Tracker*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <https://syriatracker.crowdmap.com/>

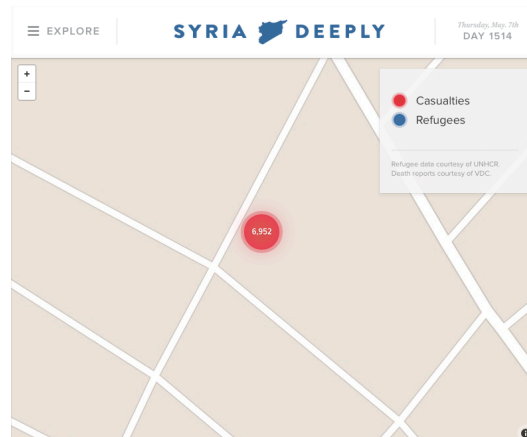


Figure 39: A proportional circle from Figure 37 at the map's lowest zoom level. [Interactive map]. (2015). *Syria Deeply*. Retrieved May 7, 2015, from: <http://v2.syriadeeply.org/map/>

## Overall Results

My coding analysis reveals several cartographic patterns. Roughly three quarters of the maps thematically depict the displacement of refugees or internally displaced peoples (IDPs). Refugees and IDPs are represented in a variety of ways including charts, graphs, total counts, points, lines, and polygons. Some maps are multivariate and included additional data related to humanitarian aid and conflict areas. In terms of function, maps intended as standalone such as the HIU reports and maps supplemental to written narratives in the *New York Times* are present in this analysis. The maps are nearly evenly split, with 55% standalone and 45% supplementary. This split is heavily dependent on the publisher.

I divided story scale into three codes: aggregated scale (group data), individual scale (individual data), and no scale (no human data). I expected to find a majority of the maps at the aggregated scale, which was true as 66 percent of the maps depict aggregated refugee data. Aggregated scale is illustrated with thematic map types such as choropleth, proportional symbol, and flow line. These thematic map types occur in 23 percent, 12 percent, and 8 percent of the maps, respectively. Thematic maps aggregate data using classification schemes. In Figure 40, for example, refugees are grouped in two classes (100,000–200,000 refugees and 200,000+ refugees). The map utilizes changes in saturation to show differentiation and magnitude. 35 maps illustrate aggregated scale with charts (bar chart, sector graph, line charts) and the display of raw quantitative data. Charts are equipped to simplify complex data in a visual way. A bar chart is also used in Figure 40 to proportionally display the number of refugees hosted by Syria's neighboring countries. Figure 40 documents raw data for each country denoting the exact number of refugees per country.

Thirty-one percent of the maps have no story scale attached. Many of these maps were



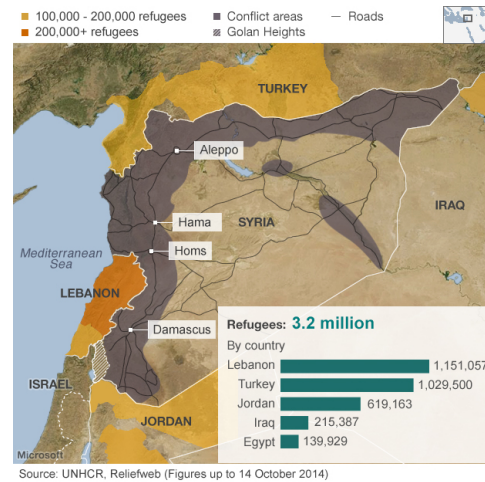


Figure 40: Choropleth map of displaced Syrians in the region as well as conflict zones. [Map]. (2014). BBC. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29991161>

general reference or qualitative thematic maps that supplement news articles. General reference maps occur 21 percent of the time and depict basic state or regional points of interest referred to in a news story. Qualitative thematic maps illustrate qualitative data related to the theme such as border crossing points, controlled areas, conflict areas, and camp locations. More than half (52 percent) of the maps are qualitative thematic maps. While these maps directly relate to Syrian refugees, individuals or groups were not specifically represented in this map type. Camp locations symbolized as points, for example, indirectly reflect refugees abroad and therefore, do not have a story scale.

Refugees are symbolized and cartographically represented in various ways, as points, lines, polygons, and in charts and graphs. Point locations of refugees and camps are present in 63 percent of the collected maps. Abstract point symbols include: circles, squares, and triangles. Legends and labels are required to understand the representation of these features. Two mimetic point symbols are utilized: pictorial person and tent. These symbols are conventionally recognizable to a Western audience. Points symbols are drawn in a broad range of hues, including red, black, green, yellow, purple, blue, grey, white, and orange. The most prominent



hue depicting refugees as point symbols was red (52%). Cognitive and cultural color association are important factors when choosing a color scheme for map symbols (Slocum et. al., 2009: 258). Red, for example, is a connotative symbol traditionally associated and understood in the West as something negative or associated with alarm or risk.

Point symbols are used to aggregate refugees into a single location or a single camp. In essence, 85,000 “points” depicting individual refugees are collapsed into a single point. Aggregation through the use of points is a useful and common cartographic technique to simplify complex data. Aggregation, however, not only lumps people into one point, it also lumps their identities, their stories, and their experiences into one common feature.

A total of four maps use lines and flow lines to depict refugees, specifically, refugee movement. The flow lines present themselves in two arrangements: dashed or solid. Black and blue hues were the only hues used in this dimension. Flow lines also aggregate groups of Syrians into one group making one journey. Individual routes with different place names, perils, and experiences are lost. The flow line’s smoothness presents an image of a permanent, undisrupted and unburdened journey. Broken or dashed flow lines appear less permanent; however, the viewer may not know why.

Forty percent of the collected maps utilize area symbolization. Syrian locations and Syrian population densities are represented as polygons, either as areas with estimated population concentrations or as enumerated units such as countries used in thematic map types (choropleth and dot density). Different hues are used to highlight these areas, including green, grey, orange, brown, red, blue, yellow, and white. Red and blue hues are most commonly used, 26 percent and 32 percent, respectively. The symbolization of refugees as designated areas or units suggests an even distribution of people. Areas can also be problematic in that they separate

areas with high densities of Syrian refugees from areas that seemingly have none. The “even” distribution of people and the artificial border of separation do not recognize the fluidity and mobility of Syrians.

As with the portrayal of refugees, IDPs are portrayed as points and lines. Only 16 percent of the collected maps depict IDPs as points, while 22 percent depict them as areas. The dominant hue for IDP point symbols is blue, and for area symbols, the dominant hue is brown. Circles are the principle shape applied to IDP point symbols and area symbols often combine IDP locations and displacement with areas of conflict; in doing so, they dilute IDP stories. It is important to note that points and areas are commonly used simultaneously.

Of the 86 maps, 80 of the maps are static. Level of interactivity varies in the remaining six maps. For example, the maps produced by *Syria Tracker* and *Syria Deeply* both use slippy maps. *Syria Tracker* created a Google Maps mash-up integrating customized data with the Google API and Google roads base map. In contrast, *Syria Deeply* uses a customized base map created with Mapbox, an open source platform for interactive mapping and customized base map design. The remaining four maps interactive maps use a swipe across or click of the map to change the map temporally. The NY Times map in Figure 41, for example, displays the evolution of camp Zaatari one click at a time.



Figure 41: A series of aerial images showing the evolution of Zaatari Refugee camp over five months. [Interactive map]. (2013). *The New York Times*. Retrieved April 12, 2015, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/05/09/world/middleeast/zaatari.html>

Base data and reference data such as roads, hydrology, cities, and terrain vary by map. Cities are depicted in 73 percent of the collected maps, and three-dimensional terrain presented as a hillshade is also prevalent (34 percent). Roads and hydrology are mapped 34 and 53 percent respectively. These base data features are important because reference locations supply contextual information to the map viewer or article reader. City symbols incorporate specific place names or locations that are important to the news article or narrative. Roads are particularly important because they are necessary for mobility such as fleeing the country or distributing aid. Roads are symbolized as fluid and continuous lines. In reality, particular groups often control roads and checkpoints and disrupt their usage. Terrain and hydrology are natural landscape features and these features are not *always* directly associated with refugee movement. Sometimes they are added as map layers solely to fill space. The physical environment, however, can play a significant role in the lives of Syrians fleeing the country whether it is terrain, waterways to be crossed, or the lack of water in the desert dictated by the physical and climatic landscape.

I also coded the maps as either abstract or representational, and as either vertical or oblique perspectives. All of the collected maps were found to portray a representational view of Syria, that is, a map with conventional symbolization easily recognized by viewers. All of the collected maps portray Syria from the vertical, top-down perspective. The vertical perspective is one conventional mapping technique that displays maps with a Cartesian coordinate system from the top-down. The oblique perspective by contrast, would give the map-reader an angled viewing point.

Aerial imagery is used in 7 of the 86 maps. Aerial imagery as depicted by the *New York Times* in Figure 41 shows the evolution of Zaatari refugee camp from a vertical perspective. A camera or satellite captures all visible features in the camp. With familiarity, this type of imagery

is easily interpreted similar to Google Earth or Google Maps. Aerial images generalize (aggregate or select) map content because only visible “reality” is captured in the image. The *New York Times* map in Figure 41, for example, provides several snapshots of the growth and development of the camp and creates a visualization that a viewer can immediately recognize. Aerial imagery as seen in the collected maps, however, only portrays what is reflected in the visible light portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, at a given scale and a specific image resolution. In these examples, the aerial image is a static depiction in time and space that neglects the invisible, whether that is infrared light or human experience.

### Symbolization of Borders

Borders are convenient tools for aggregating data across a unit of analysis such as governorates. Thematic maps such as the choropleth rely on data collected and represented across units formed by traditional borders. Borders are intuitive units for easy interpretation and are familiar to most viewers. In one form or another, traditional borders and border crossings were present in all 86 maps as lines and points. Most prevalent was the use of international borders between countries, in 76 percent of the maps, compared to the use of governorate boundaries in 37 percent of the maps. The use of each border type was highly dependent on the scale of the map. Small-scale maps primarily used international borders and large-scale maps used both international and governorate border delineations.

Traditional nation-state borders were symbolized in various ways. The most prominent style was grey and solid lines to differentiate between countries, used in over 90 percent of the maps. In Figure 43, Syria's borders are accentuated by the *New York Times* using thicker lines and a drop shadow. This cartographic strategy brings Syria into the foreground and could also be interpreted as a more difficult international border to cross. Borders were also emphasized in contrasting dark colors against white or neutral base maps, as in Figure 42, a technique that places borders higher within the visual hierarchy as a prominent visual variable.



Figure 42: A general reference map of the Syrian-Jordanian border, displayed as a dark, thick line. [Map]. (2013). *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/09/05/world/middleeast/Syrian-Refugees-in->



Figure 43: A general reference map depicting borders as solid lines with drop shadows and dashed lines. [Map]. (2015). HIU. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: [https://hiu.state.gov/Products/Syria\\_DisplacementRefugees\\_2014Jun04\\_HIU\\_U1026.pdf](https://hiu.state.gov/Products/Syria_DisplacementRefugees_2014Jun04_HIU_U1026.pdf).

Dashed lines were used in 52 percent of the maps to suggest areas of territorial disagreement. Syria, for example, claims an international boundary (Golan Heights) that is currently Israeli occupied territory. This boundary line was often displayed as a dashed line.

Kurdistan is another area frequently represented with a dashed line because it is not internationally recognized as a nation, recognized instead as semi-autonomous (Figure 44). The intermittent spaces of a dashed line also imply a sense of fluidity and unrestricted or minimally restricted borders. While solid lines appear permanent, dashed lines appear impermanent and uncertain.

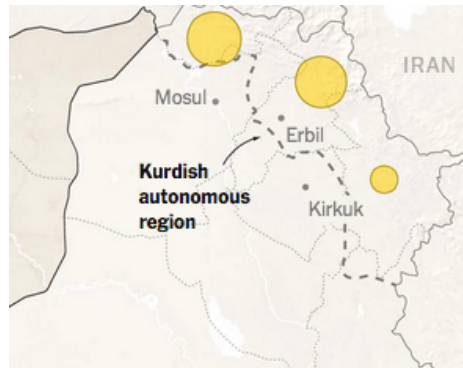


Figure 44: Proportional circle map depicting Syrian refugee concentrations in Kurdish regions in northern Iraq. [Map]. (2014). *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/the-iraq-isis-conflict-in-maps->

In addition to borders, I also coded 17 maps with border crossing points. Border crossing points are the important gateways for Syrians fleeing into neighboring countries. Seven maps symbolized border crossing points as hollow circles and five as white open circles with a horizontal line through them. Other maps symbolized borders mimetically. For example, two maps illustrated restricted borders with circle symbols and overlapping red X's (Figure 45). The circles represent exact locations and restrictive points that straddle boundary lines. In contrast, four maps used border-crossing points that resembled bridges or gateways between two countries (Figure 46). Bridge symbols appear to connect countries and place an emphasis on the mobility of refugees.



Figure 45: Thematic map with border crossings symbolized in red. [Map]. (2015). UNHCR. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://reliefweb.int/map/syrian-arab-republic/syria-strategic-needs-analysis-project-regional-displacement-25-january>

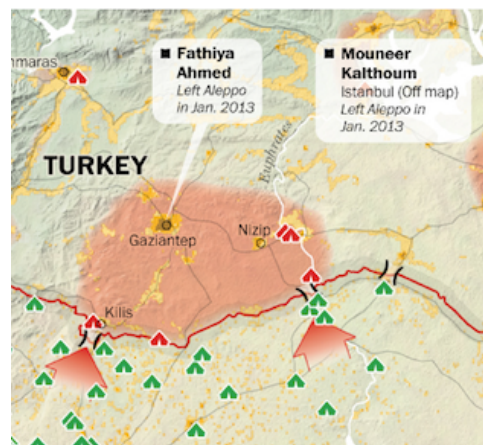


Figure 46: Syrian refugee crisis map depicting concentrations of Syrians in Turkey, including individuals by name. [Map]. (2013). *The Washington Post*. Retrieved January 21, 2015, from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/syrian-refugee-crisis-map/2013/12/13/2b758d6a-645a-11e3->

## Discussion and Critique

My critical feminist analysis of these results reveals several techniques that silence Syrian stories and border experiences. Here, I summarize these silencing and conventional cartographic techniques in light of relevant literature as well as suggest transformative and unconventional cartographic techniques and solutions.

The overwhelming presence of traditional borders in my analysis indicates a heavy

reliance on state centric thinking of the Syrian conflict. Syria's borders are clearly defined at multiple scales: state and governorate. Three quarters of the maps depict state boundaries and nearly 40 percent depict governorate boundaries. Syria's mapped borders reinforce territory, sovereignty, and power within the map. This definition of space separates Syrians from Lebanese, Jordanians, Israelis, and Turks and separates IDPs from refugees. In other words, the mapped border creates distinct cross-border identities of *us* versus *them* (Diener and Hagen, 2012).

In many ways, the maps in this analysis reflect John Agnew's *territorial trap* (1994: 59; 2009: 22). The delineation of Syrian borders as fixed lines separates internal and external affairs. The state appears as a unified and homogenous society when in fact, internal religious diversity and socioeconomic hierarchy produced the crisis. Jeremy Black (1997: 121-146) documents the mapping of borders and frontiers with the rise of nation-states, and in this study, the mapped borders reinforce and perpetuate the continuation and dominance of the state seen throughout recent history. The maps neglect the rich history of continued evolution (locational and conceptual) of borders in the region. The Syrian humanitarian and refugee maps in this study remain trapped.

Globalization and geopolitics continue to redefine borders. On one hand, borders have become more fluid (Agnew, 1994: 77). On the other hand, border controls have also tightened due to the global war on terror and increased securitization of many countries (Jones, 2012: 5-12). Border marks—points (bridges and circle) and lines (dashed and solid)—echo the paradox of borders and globalization (fluidity versus securitization). Bridges convey cross-border movement of individuals at particular border-crossing points, whereas circle symbols appear more like roadblocks. In a similar way, borders with dashed lines support movement or uncertainty through



intermittent spaces whereas solid lines emphasize security through continuous bounding. A majority (92 percent) of maps in this study reflect the latter, impermeable and secure borders with solid black lines and seven maps use circle point symbols at border-crossing checkpoints. Half of the maps depict the fluidity of borders with dashed lines and four maps use bridges at official border-crossing points. The over-emphasis on static and secure borders misrepresents the variation of borders in a geopolitical context. A combination of border symbols—dashed and solid—is perhaps a more accurate representation. Present in only 20 percent of the maps, mimetic border marks such as bridges are most effective for connecting geopolitics and experience to the border.

Borderlands or border regions are “areas in proximity to the border which constitute a transition zone between two distinct categories, rather than a clear cut-off line” (Newman, 2011: 37). Borders’ theory extends the dimensions and spatiality of borders from lines and points to areas (Rumford, 2006: 161-162). These areas act as zones of cross-border activity and common identities, but are loosely defined and frequently regulated on each side for cultural, economic, and security purposes (Newman, 2011; Rumford, 2006). The borders in this study were all represented as lines or points and none of the maps depicts areas or borderlands. Although blurry and increasingly complex, borderlands are important features experienced by Syrians nearing the borders. In the next chapter, I will explore the use of areas to more accurately depict borderlands and experiences in border zones.

Guidice and Guibilaro (2015: 84-85) use the term *borderscape* to understand the complexity and performance of borders through individual experiences and imaginations. These mapped borders, however, lack this dynamic performance and therefore, limit the performers and bodies that contest, interact with and cross them. Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002: 335-339)

recognize experiences of borders, border crossings, and different interpretations of the state through women's experiences collected through email. In contrast, the maps in this study do not recognize the personal experiences of borders and border crossings.

There is also a disconnect between telling and visualizing stories with mixed media and mapping. Forty-five percent of the maps supplement mixed media. The stories present in those media—articles, interviews, images, and videos—are missing from the accompanying maps. One goal of this study is to bridge this gap between maps and mixed media by including maps as primary forms of effective storytelling.

Non-traditional borders defined in the literature as social space and *contact spaces* where people engage and interact are not apparent in this study (Nare, 2012: 264). Non-traditional borders are the borders of everyday experience—class, sexuality, and migrancy (Nare, 2012: 370-374). Non-traditional borders are more difficult to identify and map because they are socially produced and unlike a border checkpoint, not obvious markers in the landscape. Rather, they are individual and customized experiences with invisible but prominent barriers. In these maps, borders of gender, age, money, class, occupation, and language are not depicted. Attempts have been made to critically analyze and reshape the visualization of borders to more effectively depict borders and the geopolitical and the individual realities of border experiences (Moore and Perdue, 2014; Novaes, 2015; Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015). The maps analyzed here do not follow this critical approach to mapping borders. In Chapter 6, I will develop symbolization that embraces and enhances all borders, both traditional and non-traditional.

The maps in this analysis are discursive structures that shape knowledge about the Syrian crisis and refugees (Waite, 2005: 168). With conventional cartographic vocabularies, each map is embedded with hidden or implied interactions of power and knowledge as discussed by John

Brian Harley (1989: 3). The content analysis uncovers hidden metanarratives of power and knowledge and reveals the Syrian voices silenced by conventional cartographic techniques such as the symbolization of the body as points, lines, and polygons, aggregation and selection, vertical perspective, base maps, and type. In this thesis, I address and enhance these conventions with new techniques to render Syrian border experiences visible and give Syrians a more pronounced geographic voice as yet unavailable to them through conventional cartographies.

The representation of the body in these collected maps also falls short of the extensive theoretical work on the topic (Longhurst, 1997; Sprunk, 2010). Although there is no clear definition of the body or embodiment, the maps in this study prioritized the mind, a masculine approach to knowledge and mapping, by reducing the body and experience to undifferentiated geometries (Longhurst, 1997: 487; Sprunk, 2010: 289). The bodies of Syrian refugees are illustrated as sets of points, flow lines, and polygons in 63, 5, and 40 percent of the maps, respectively. Conventional marks or symbols simplify Syrian experiences and the complexity of the body in several ways. Pearce discusses two strategies to address these issues:

For those mapmakers who do seek to portray geographies shaped by experience, one strategy is to reject Western cartographic convention and remake the map through other expressive forms that more directly capture... emotional qualities (Pearce, 2008: 18).

None of the maps in this study are abstract representations and so, I follow Pearce's second strategy to expand and critically reshape existing cartographic language consisting of points, lines, and polygons "without leaving the realm of the digital map" (Pearce, 2008: 18). In the next chapter, I uncover the silences in each mark and explore their potential.

Point symbols have uniform and fixed coordinates and therefore appear unchanging and static. Point symbols are also problematic when they collapse groups of individuals into points. As seen in Figure 29 from the *New York Times*, the 80,000 people of Zaartari refugee camp in

Jordan are collapsed into a single point. When not aggregated, point symbols are useful for portraying individual bodies and individual stories. The conscious use of mimetic point symbols along with hue, type, and voice can enhance a point symbol's representation of the body.

In contrast to point symbols, line symbols—specifically flow lines—inherently show movement and directionality. One disadvantage is that line symbols emphasize the beginning and end of a body's journey whereas the journey in-between is highly generalized. Similar to point symbols, flow lines often aggregate bodies to make them appear continuous, solid, smooth, and one-directional. These qualities misrepresent the lived experience of a mobile body but can be improved with disruptive dashes, thickness changes, limited generalization, hue, type, and added voice.

Areas show aggregated refugees or bodies over space but lack fixed locations. Without fixed locations, areas support imagined movement within confined limits. When symbolized with solid hues, however, the movement and distribution of the bodies and their experiences are assumed to be equal and uniform. Similar to borders, areas bounded by solid lines create separation and limit the mobility of the mapped bodies. Gradated hues and softer or dashed boundaries illustrate uneven and uncertain distribution and movement of bodies. When aggregated, bodies as areas are incomplete. None of the collected maps used areas to depict individuals. In this thesis, I explore areas as symbolization for the individual body and for mapping non-traditional borders.

The “messiness” of the body and subjective experience must be incorporated into mapping as it has already been incorporated into human geography (Longhurst, 1997: 495). This “messiness” can be melded into existing cartographic marks. I will seek to create new point, line,

and polygon symbolization that renders Syrian bodies visible and disrupts the conventional division of mind and body and its corresponding effect of gendered hierarchy.

The body is also made up of complex identities. An intersectional approach recognizes these identities, avoids vast generalizations of groups of people, and eludes the categorization of individuals into one group (Mohanty, 2013). MapAction was the only map source that incorporated demographic data—presumed identities of sex and age—in the form of a table into a map layout. While the tables show rough counts of sex and age, the intersectionality of an individual is not visualized in the map, as symbolization remained uniform. The majority of the maps overlook the complex and unique identities of Syrians and instead, conflate their experiences. Aggregation and categorization are common cartographic techniques used in these maps to depict the plight of *all* Syrian people. With the exception of MapAction, all of the sources grouped Syrians into a single identity: refugee or IDP.

The aggregation techniques used in my study sample include: 1) Collapsing bodies into points, lines, and polygons as previously discussed, 2) Categorizing and classifying refugees and IDPs for thematic map types such as choropleth, proportional symbol, and flow line maps—used in 23, 12, and 8 percent of the maps respectively, 3) Using charts and graphs in 41 percent of the maps to condense information, and 4) Designating the magnitude of displacement with raw numbers. These techniques suppress individual intersectionality, such that the body along with his or her unique identity is lost.

Aggregation does serve particular purposes such as UHNCR's maps of water allocation and maps of needs assessments in refugee camps. And it is not an inherently silencing technique. *Connected difference*, for example, responsibly recognizes intersectionality, while simultaneously grouping individuals (Mohanty, 2013: 549). An intersectional approach will

allow me to understand and build complex identities and connected difference into map symbolization.

Inclusion and transformation are common themes in critical feminism that also apply to mapmaking (Lorber, 2001; Runyan and Peterson, 2014; Everett and Charlton, 2014). For example, aggregated marks can be an inclusive attempt to tell the story of Syrian refugees and IDPs. The presence of the marks, however, cannot fully encompass the body and its emotions and experiences. The maps do not transform or redefine the story map. Soja's 'trialectic' of *first-*, *second-*, and *thirdspace* is relevant to the exploration of these themes in cartography and specifically, this study (Cresswell, 2013; Soja, 1999). Firstspace elicits the universal truth of objective cartography. The 86 collected maps follow this model by using conventional techniques and elevated perspective. Similar to Harley's deconstruction of the map and Soja's secondspace, the maps in this chapter are coded to reveal power, hidden stories, and ingrained silences (1989; 1999). A transformative approach represents thirdspace and aims to "redefine" or "undefine" conventional mapping techniques to more accurately depict Syrian refugee experiences of border crossings. The goal of this study is to map thirdspace by creating news maps with a transformative approach to symbolization.

All of the maps in this study were depicted from a vertical perspective, also called the view from nowhere, which is critiqued by feminists as "distancing, mastering, [and] objectifying" the map (Deutsche, 1991: 11). The collected maps visually *appropriate* the world from this top-down perspective (Haraway, 1991). Seven maps incorporate aerial imagery and all of the maps utilize geographic data. These data types neglect experienced realities and render the individual invisible (Kwan, 2002). As suggested by Kwan, I aim to *re-appropriate* the map and GIScience by remaining cognizant of the feminist critique of vision (2002). I will attempt to use

critical feminist cartographic techniques such as oblique perspectives and individual story scale to improve the expression of form and subjective experience.

Base maps consist of general reference information such as borders, cities, roads, hydrology, and terrain. The goal of the base map is to enhance, not retract, the story being mapped. Charles Minard successfully accomplished this goal in his most notable work, *Napoleon's March to Moscow*, with simple line work and minimal hues. In addition, he only mapped reference information when encountered by the body or bodies, in this case, Napoleon's troops. In addition, Pearce (2008) and Pearce and Hermann (2010) only map landscape features if they are experienced. Geographies outside of direct experience do not exist.

Cities, roads, hydrology, and terrain are mapped in 73, 34, 53, and 42 percent of the collected maps. These reference layers are frequently used by convention. In Figure X, for example, the roads, hydrology, and terrain are prominent features yet do not enhance the story of refugee distribution. I will enhance the Syrian stories of border crossings by only developing base map reference layers in direct connection to the story and experience, with particular attention to roads and terrain given their relationship to mobility within a landscape.

Type is typically used in mapping for titles, supplementary text, and labeling features. Typographic rules, established most notably by Edward Imhoff (1975), guide cartographers to proper type placement and labeling. Pearce (2008: 27) extends type beyond the city name, using diary excerpts as “narrative caption[s]” that carry the viewer through the map and the individual's experiences. All of the maps in this study conventionally use type to label particular features such as cities or countries. The text and labels, however, do not possess the emotive quality found in Pearce's *Framing the Days* (2008). I will use the breadth of typographic families along with hue and size to insert the individual and bodily experience into the final maps. Type

can make the individual visible by giving the individual a voice. This voice directly inserts individual bodily experiences into the map and effectively narrates the story for the viewer.

Reflexivity places the cartographer within the map and denotes his or her positionality and partial, subjective knowledge (Kwan, 2002; England, 1994). Reflexivity was not a common thread in the maps and associated articles analyzed in this section. Kevin Sullivan (2013), the author of “Refuge”, introduces himself, his collaborators, and the goals of the project on the main page of his *Washington Post* article. His statement locates the purposes of the project but does not locate Kevin Sullivan or his collaborator as Western journalists documenting such tribulation. This failed positionality statement creates a separation between the researchers and participants, a hierarchy of power that is indirectly reflected in the map. I will maintain reflexivity by recognizing and documenting my positionality and situatedness throughout this project. While my position as an outsider is always partial and limited, a reflexive approach will responsibly address these limitations and their effect on the research questions at hand.

My analysis allows me to place Western contemporary mapping techniques of the Syrian refugee crisis into the broader realm of story mapping. Syrian stories are told in dimensions of time and space and can be mapped various ways and through various lenses developed for story mapping (e.g. Wood, 1989; Caquard, 2013; Kwan, 2008; Pearce, 2008). Lacking in these maps was a critical approach to the story map. Border and power dynamics remain unquestioned and simultaneously hide individual experiences (Caquard, 2011; Harley, 1989). With the exception of one map—a map published by *The Washington Post* that references six individuals and their border crossings, the remaining maps do not present the individual stories, thus further ignoring emotion, experience, and the lived realities of refugees.

All of the maps utilized the Internet as a principle form of communicating Syrian stories.



*National Geographic's* three maps were also available in print. A majority of the maps (93 percent) are static representations online and six maps employ interactivity within the map to show changes over time or detailed information at high zoom levels. Online mapping promotes the additional use of text, images, video, and graphics to enhance the story being told, which often diminishes the role of the map. In a similar way, ESRI's story map concept combines maps and multimedia as a way of "organizing and presenting information... to tell the story of a place, event, [or] issue" (ESRI, 2014). ESRI moves the stories off the map and into the multimedia piece, while still calling it a story map. Many of the stories depicted in the collected maps are similarly removed. Mapping is the core of this project and I aim to utilize the map as a primary form of storytelling, not a supplementary, reference material.

While this analysis is useful for documenting the cartographic techniques that depict Syrian refugees and borders, I recognize its limited scope. The maps are a selected sample from a wide and ever changing array of published sources, as Western media continue to cover the Syria crisis. The purpose and function of each map often cannot be fully determined because the mapmakers were not consulted. In some cases, as with the UNHCR maps, the priority is to depict on-the-ground needs within a camp, not individual experience, and so my analysis may not prove fair given the mapmaker's purpose. Lastly, given my own positionality as a Western academic and outsider, my interpretation and analysis of the collected maps is partial and incomplete. Maintaining an awareness of these limitations, this analysis is the foundation from which to explore how to add the lived experiences of Syrians to the map through alternative critical, feminist cartographic techniques.

## CHAPTER 5: The Stories: Interviews and published stories

### Background

#### Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is a qualitative research method frequently used in the social sciences to gather information from individuals or groups to better understand their perspectives on a topic. Dunn (2010: 101) defines interviewing in geography as a “data-gathering method in which there is a spoken exchange of information.” This exchange of information traditionally takes place in a face-to-face environment; however, interviews can also be adapted for the phone, video, and computer-mediated communications such as email (more on computer-mediated communications in the next sub-section). The breadth of interview media allows access to individuals without having to travel to a particular study area.

Interviewing is an advantageous qualitative research method for several reasons. Interviews provide context, perspectives, and explanations to fill in knowledge gaps that other methods are unable to explain. Census data, for example, provides a numeric depiction of a phenomenon at a particular scale or unit of analysis. Interviews conducted within a unit of analysis may provide grounded explanations for the phenomenon that would otherwise be lost within the census data. They are also useful in understanding complex behaviors and motivations of interviewees and allow the researcher to contrast differing opinions. Interviews may open new doors or perspectives for the researcher by revealing unexpected viewpoints. Because interviews utilize personal interaction, the researcher and the interviewee can develop *social trust* that leads to richness in interview content and data. Last, interviews can be empowering for informants and should therefore be treated as valued information and with respect (Dunn, 2010: 102).

Interviews can be conducted in various ways: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Interview types fall along a continuum of organization and format. Structured interviews, at one end of the spectrum, are fairly rigid in format such that questions are predetermined and are identically and chronologically asked. The questions serve as a control within the study. Unstructured interviews, often called oral or life histories, are at the opposite end of the spectrum. Each interview is customized and informant-based as they “seek personal accounts of significant events and perceptions, as determined by the informants and their own words” (Dunn, 2010: 111). Questions are developed on the fly and are completely dictated by the direction of the conversation (Dunn, 2010).

Semi-structured interviews fall along the middle of the interview continuum as they rely on a series of questions or keywords based on relevant literature and background knowledge. Questions and keywords guide the interview but interactions are not strictly held to the questions. The interview remains fluid and conversational. With this flexibility, impromptu questions are encouraged and welcomed as deemed relevant by the researcher. The researcher can steer conversation back to predefined questions as needed (Dunn, 2010).

Formulating good interview questions is an important step in the process, especially for structured and semi-structured interviews. Questions should be carefully crafted to avoid ambiguity, offensive language, and leading questions. Dunn (2010) suggests using common words or phrases to avoid confusion and if possible, sending the interviewee the questions in advance. Questions can fall into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary questions initiate a discussion on a particular topic and secondary questions act as prods or prompts for further detail or clarification. Primary questions can include descriptive and storytelling questions (Dunn, 2010: 106). Descriptive questions are useful for specific details relating to key

events, places, and experiences. Storytelling questions examine experiences, feelings, and perspectives within the context of a story. Secondary questions demand the attention of the researcher and social cues. Secondary questions call for follow-up questions, clarification of an answer, question prompts, or summary of an answer (Dunn, 2010: 105-109).

### **Computer-mediated communication**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) has gained popularity with the advent of the Internet and has become “an established format for research-oriented interviewing” (Dunn, 2010: 128). There are two modes to perform CMC interviews: asynchronous such as emailing and synchronous such as online chats. For the purposes of this study, I focus on interviews via email.

There are several advantages of CMC, including: larger samples, reduced interviewer effects, convenience, more reflective informant responses, and cost saving (Dunn, 2010: 128). Email interviews are helpful for participants living abroad because of time differences. Although email requires Internet connection on both ends of the interview, emails do not require immediate responses. Therefore, individuals can respond at his or her convenience and do not have to rely on continuous, uninterrupted Internet access required by video streaming such as Skype. Because CMC is convenience oriented, extra time allows participants to think and proofread his or her responses. This is particularly advantageous for participants who are not fluent in the language of the interview. Responses tend to be more specific, accurate, and thorough (Dunn, 2010). CMC increases visual anonymity of the participant and allows researchers to cross social barriers. Concealing visual identity is “appropriate when the topic is very sensitive” (Dunn, 2010: 129).

Anonymity, however, is also a disadvantage of CMC interviewing. Without face-to-face interaction, researchers are unable to observe social cues and settings. These observations help

build social trust and are restricted in emails. Second, anonymity and the distance between the research and participants create issues of participant authenticity and misinformation. This requires “researchers using email interviews... [to] rely heavily on ‘reading between the lines’ of answers” (Dunn, 2010: 131). Lastly, email interviews conducted online are exposed to Internet privacy issues. Privacy concerns must be transparent to protect participants, identities, and interview responses.

Dunn (2010) provides several suggestions specific to conducting computer-mediated interviews. Researchers must be transparent from the beginning of CMC interaction and should introduce himself or herself and his or her affiliation as well as fully disclose how the participant’s email was obtained. Full transparency helps develop social trust and build respect between participant and researcher. Because email interviews are temporally flexible, clear deadlines must also be determined because communication can be open-ended (Dunn, 2010: 132-135).

### **Methods: Interviews and published stories**

I use semi-structured interviews, computer-mediated communication, and published stories to better understand Syrian refugee experiences and the borders they encounter (both traditional and non-traditional). The qualitative data collected from these sources aim to address my second research question: **What have been the experiences of Syrian refugees crossing borders during the 2011-2014 crisis?**

### **Semi-structured interviews and computer-mediate communication**

With the assistance of a local non-governmental organize (NGO) and other contacts, I arranged seven interviews with my contacts and their affiliates. With KU Human Subjects

Committee approval (Appendix C), I began scheduling interviews in late February and March, 2015. The demographic makeup of my participants consisted of three women and four men. All of the interviewees were over the age of 18. Three participants were Syrian, two Jordanian, and two American. Additional demographic data was not obtained. The geographic location of the interviewees ranged from Kansas and Washington DC to Jordan and Turkey. All of the participants worked in some capacity of humanitarian relief whether in the US or abroad. My seven interviewees included: **Adiba**, a second generation Syrian living in the US who works for a non-governmental organization; **Mohammed**, a Syrian activist displaced and working in Washington DC; **Hannah**, an American geographic information specialist working in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan; **Eva**, an American researcher working in Amman, Jordan focused on needs assessments inside Syria; **Fateh** and **Baraq**, Jordanian geographic information specialists working in Zaatari; and **Amal**, a Syrian physician providing medical care to both sides of the revolution before fleeing to Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Last, as part of my Human Subjects approval, individuals were given the option to participate via Skype (Hannah and Eva), phone (Adiba and Mohammed), or email (Fateh, Baraq, and Amal).

Originally, I planned to interview Syrian refugees. Organizing direct interviews with refugees was difficult because a primary contact in Jordan fell through. As a result, only two of my interview participants are Syrian refugees. My interview agenda shifted and I focused my efforts on humanitarian aid and advocate workers and their perceptions and experiences of Syrian borders. I use secondary source stories of Syrian refugee women collected from a recent publication to expound on and ground my interviews (see next section).

Semi-structured interviews were advantageous because they are flexible and conversational. I developed primary interview questions and keywords (Appendix B) related to

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<sup>1</sup> All names and any identifiable information have been changed or deleted to protect the identities of participants.

major themes in my literature review including traditional borders, non-traditional borders, border experiences, mobility, and safety. Questions and keywords were continuously revised. For example, many of my questions did not apply to Eva and her area of expertise because her work with IDPs stops at Syria's international border. Instead, I incorporated impromptu questions related to non-traditional borders and boundaries within Syria as experienced by IDPs and humanitarian aid organizations. In this way, questions remained dynamic and fluid. One limitation of the semi-structured interview method, however, is consistency between participants.

I conducted the interviews in English and began each interview with full transparency in regards to vulnerability, risk, anonymity, and oral consent guidelines presented in Dunn (2010) and suggested by the KU Human Subjects Committee (see Appendix). After receiving the oral consent from each participant, I recorded phone and Skype conversations electronically using a digital recording device. Each semi-structured interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Notes were taken throughout the interview to highlight themes and record relevant information outside of questions and responses. For example, I documented when there was a dropped call or delay in conversation and the mood present throughout the interview. Upon completion, I immediately reflected on each interview in writing. I assessed the success of each interview and noted suggestions for the coming interviews. The interview recordings were downloaded from the digital recording device and saved onto my personal external hard drive. Using ExpressScribe, an open source transcription program available online, I transcribed each interview for further coding and analysis.

Three interviews—Fateh, Baraq, and Amal—were conducted through email. I sent interviews questions to Fateh and Baraq via email. Because they work on the same team, Fateh and Baraq reflected, discussed, and responded to each question together pooling their collective

knowledge. I sent my questions in three emails which allowed for follow-up questions and clarification in their responses. In contrast, Amal's interview was collected with his written story in a Microsoft Word document. I was unable to respond with further questions.

I analyzed each interview using the same descriptive and analytic codes I developed for the Western media maps. I expanded these codes to include major themes, place-names, feelings, experiences, and non-traditional borders. I then narrated and analyzed each interviewee's story. This analysis formed the foundation for identifying and mapping the border experiences of Syrian refugees and aid workers.

### **Published Stories**

I emailed Katty Alhayek, a graduate student at Ohio University, in October 2014 to inquire about her 2014 publication related to the invisibility of Syrian refugee women and their depiction online and in the media. She encouraged me to seek out her forthcoming publication "Untold Stories of Syrian Women Surviving War" (Alhayek, 2015). Alhayek's manuscript recounts the stories of six Syrian women revealing the intersectionality of these women in contrast to the dominant representations of Syrian women. She aims to "make visible untold stories of Syrian women fighting for freedom and surviving the war" (Alhayek, 2015: 6). Her findings are based on in-depth interviews with these women conducted in the summer of 2013 (Alhayek, 2015). I analyzed these stories as a secondary source to better understand the many borders and experiences faced by Syrian women.

### **Results: Semi-structured interviews**

The six semi-structured interviews provide a more detailed account of Syrian experiences crossing borders whether it is Qutaiba's antidotal story of leaving Syria and continuing activist work in the US, Fahed's logistical perspective of Syrians waiting at the border, or Emily's



research related to accessibility of aid to vulnerable populations within Syria. In this section, I delve into each of their stories to highlight major themes and identify traditional and non-traditional borders. Here are their stories.

### Adiba's Story

Adiba has been a part of this project from the beginning and has been a great resource. I met and emailed with Adiba several times before our formal interview. She was my primary contact at a local non-governmental organization (NGO). Her organization was founded in 2011 in direct response to the crisis. With offices in the United States, Turkey, Jordan, and Syria, her organization consists of a network of over 400 employees, delivers humanitarian aid (23 million dollars worth), and promotes long-term sustainability (Adiba, 2015). Adiba elaborated, “90 percent of our programs revolve around health but we also do food... [and] education” (2015). Adiba manages these humanitarian programs. Because of our familiarity, Adiba volunteered to be my first interview, a test run.

Adiba is Syrian and has lived her whole life in the United States. Her father immigrated to the US in the 1980s to pursue his master's and doctorate degrees. Adiba has numerous family members abroad throughout Europe and the Middle East. She frequently travels abroad to work in field offices in Jordan and Turkey. Adiba's personal and professional ties to the region make her story and insight particularly useful. Our conversation targeted the complexity of the Syrian crisis and both traditional and non-traditional borders with added personal touches throughout.

When asked to give an overview of the Syrian crisis, Adiba focused her attention on the complexity of the situation:

I would just describe it as the most complex humanitarian crisis of the century, definitely in the past 50 years for sure. Syria is very different because there are a variety of issues

relative to other humanitarian crises. There are a lot of political undertones. A lot of different components or factors [security issues, opposition groups] I guess that have contributed to the crisis. Part of the reason why it has been so long lasting is because of its complexity (Adiba, 2015).

In reference to key players in the crisis and the role of the Islamic State (ISIS), Adiba commented that ISIS is not the only armed group or threat. The group is just one of many forces playing into the complexity of the situation.

The complexity of the crisis has directly impacted the delivery of humanitarian aid inside Syria and across various international borders. Humanitarian aid delivery is dependent on porous borders:

One of the major factors for our work and even the reason why we've been able to deliver so much aid is because of [the] fluidity of those borders. I mean it's been hard with fluctuations and different checkpoints and different borders that close from time to time... Cross border activity is just essential to the crisis itself. I know with a lot of UN resolutions... one of the main components of it is ensuring that there is a lot of access to the border from, you know, surrounding countries of Syria (Adiba, 2015).

I then asked Adiba to describe Syria's international borders with Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan:

I would say Turkish [border] more fluid or porous. I think the Lebanese more unpredictable. The Jordanian is very temperamental. It really depends... I think from the Jordanian side to also the government, it's very finicky... right now [it's difficult for] Syrians [to get] into Jordan. Where in Turkey, it's a bit different. And it's not to say that Jordan hasn't been a good host community, it's just that they are over capacity. I think Turkey is a bit more equipped but I think they'll probably get to a point where they are beyond capacity. I know with Lebanon it's... just more politically dynamic and there's a bit more tension between, you know, Syria and Lebanon generally (Adiba, 2015).

Geopolitics has played a significant role in the loosening and tightening of Syria's border with Lebanon and Jordan. The importance here is that the borders are constantly changing. Adiba discussed the push to completely shut down the border from Syria to Jordan. Previously, however, the border was much more fluid and dynamic as people were allowed to cross uninhibited (Adiba, 2015).

Several non-traditional borders were discussed in my interview with Adiba. The non-traditional borders mentioned (sex, gender, age, affluence, and occupation) affected individual's movement across international borders. They acted as barriers or bridges across borders. When asked about sex, age, and mobility, Adiba responded with:

I know from what we've seen so far, you know, it's very difficult for young men, like early twenties, mid-twenties, late-twenties. That's... like a high-risk age to be trying to leave... for so many reasons. If they are within Syria, there's the potential [to be called] to serve in the Syrian Army or they're just at that age where if they do leave, they're not coming back and a lot of countries don't want to take in people who aren't, at some point, trying to leave... For women, I think it's been a bit easier... [Women are told] if you want to come to Europe, make sure you have one your children at least with you because that makes a big difference in how the host community will treat you. It makes a difference between staying in a tent, caravan, or apartment (Adiba, 2015).

Adiba assured me that age and sex greatly affect how a Syrian refugee is received within a host community.

Adiba mentioned affluence and occupation as passports for crossing borders. She said:

Generally... different movements really depend on how capable people are of leaving. I would say that people who are more affluent are able to, kind of, eventually make it to Europe or the US but at the same time, a lot of people who are still stuck in Jordan in the refugee camps or Turkey, don't have that option (Adiba, 2015).

She continued that money has a tendency to get you further away from Syria. However, life outside of Syria, especially in Jordan, is very expensive and money runs out quickly. Some Syrians end up moving to the camps after a couple years in Jordan because they need help (Adiba, 2015).

Adiba highlighted education and occupation as significant determinants of success outside of Syria. She specifically talked about an uncle that has been able to move to the US because he is trained as a doctor. Even with his training, the process for his entry into the US was time consuming and his family currently resides in Egypt. He hasn't seen his children in two and a half years. Adiba's summarized his situation with:

There's economic boundaries, limitations and just so many different factors that come into how well you can thrive outside of Syria once you leave... I think a big component of that is being able to have a career that translates well, whether it's engineering or medicine... law. Different careers are definitely more versatile (Adiba, 2015).

In contrast, many without these versatile careers end up back at square one. Educational training and occupation play a significant role in success post-Syria. In this way, they act as personal, non-traditional borders.

### Mohammed's Story

Mohammed was born and raised in Syria. Activism is in his blood. His father became involved in the Syrian anti-government movement in 1965. When the Arab Spring began in Egypt and Tunisia, Mohammed felt the same urge learned from his father. He said, "when it started, it just like, something walked around inside me and was like, this is who you are" (Mohammed, 2015). Mohammed quickly became involved at the beginning of the revolution and worked in media and development. He organized demonstrations and produced media reports about the crisis. After being arrested twice and having his brother's safety threatened, Mohammed decided to leave Syria. He moved to the Washington D.C. in March 2013, where he continues his activist work from abroad with a start-up non-profit organization (Mohammed, 2015).

I interviewed Mohammed over the phone and the mood was relatively light as Mohammed walked the streets of Washington D.C. Our conversation straddled his personal story and his knowledge of the Syrian crisis as a well-educated, Syrian activist. Mohammed's passion for activism was interspersed with antidotal information about life before the crisis. Themes of family and regret as well as formal and informal borders were prominent in his story.

Life before the revolution was progressively getting worse. Political freedoms and economic livelihood became highly controlled by the Syrian regime (Mohammed, 2015). For example:

Politically, like freedoms, everything was like so bad... the way the regime was governing Syria was like just horrible. And it was like, we were seeing it. It's getting worse. Like when Assad's father was dead, there was a lot of progression... But when Assad came to power, he wanted to be involved in everything (Mohammed, 2015).

The Assad regime began requiring all businesses to share fifteen percent of their profits with the government. Mohammed recounted that it wasn't about the money. It was about having control over one's life, financially and politically. Despite these oppressive controls, Mohammed still called Syria the "best place to be" because of its potential and because of family (2015).

Family and community were common themes in our conversation dating before and after the start of the revolution. Mohammed comes from a upper-class or high-class family with many connections within the Damascus community. He described the tight knit community with:

Living anywhere in Syria is just like, wherever it was, was like living with your family... Everyone knows everyone... No one really locks the door to their house... no one would walk in and steal anything... It's like, wherever you go, you know someone... No one really leaves their family and goes to live alone... Of course, everyone starts working since they're sixteen and starts to make their own money. But when [you] get married, you just like buy a house next to your parents house to stay close. For example, in one of the places I lived with my family, it was an apartment building. So [whenever] like someone is going to leave, you tell first tell that neighbor to see if anyone wants like to buy his apartment. So my father bought four apartments in the same building and then brought my uncle and a couple of his friends to the building (Mohammed, 2015).

According to Mohammed, this familial closeness also helped the revolution by spreading the word when someone died. The family is a network of communication in the revolution.

Because of his family's status, Mohammed had connections and many friends in government within his network. After he was arrested the first time, he said "they were forced to release me under pressure from my family because they have um some connections"

(Mohammed, 2015). After he was arrested for the second time for his relief work, “some family member, he spoke to the president and got me special presidential amnesty and I was released” (Mohammed, 2015). His network of connections not only got him out of prison but also helped in his escape in 2011. He continued, “I was lucky. They didn’t really have my name on the border and like my family arranged like me, me getting out and just like, everything after” (Mohammed, 2015).

I asked Mohammed to describe his life in Washington D.C. after leaving Syria in one word. His word of choice was *mistake*. He explained that he should not have left for a few reasons:

First thing is, it’s just like, it’s different working from the inside dealing with the daily life of the people... and being outside working with the opposition... They have their own ideas about what’s going on. They’re actually connected to what is going on the ground... And another thing, when you leave, when you leave Syria, you’re not fully with the people, living what they live, being under shelling, bombing, and facing what they face in their daily lives. You kind of lose your ability to affect on them... People will just like, they just don’t, don’t take criticism or advice from people who are out. They don’t trust you... And another thing... I worked with some people who were inside. Some people left and some people like died... of torture by the regime. So yeah, it’s just like, you know, the feeling that we started this thing, we encouraged people to go out... We encouraged them to say what they believed... and then when this happens, you just left them alone (Mohammed, 2015).

He continued:

Whatever you do, you still have this feeling that you’re not doing enough... I don’t want to wake up in the morning and like, look into myself in the mirror and like, and ask myself: ‘How did I survive?’ You know? ‘How am I going to live this life, like after everything happened?’ (Mohammed, 2015).

Mohammed crossed a significant informal border leaving Syria, his family, and on-the-ground activist work. His new landscape on the other side of this border is shaped by regret and isolation.

After completing the interview, I felt as though I lacked Mohammed's personal story of border crossings. Upon further review, however, my interview with Mohammed provided an important bridge between personal experience and activist knowledge. Mohammed's activist position and knowledge of the Syrian revolution was incredibly valuable to this study. He understood borders in light of his experiences but also the continued difficulty of Syrians crossing various borders, both traditional and non-traditional.

Mohammed discussed traditional borders at length. At the beginning of the revolution, people crossed borders at airports and formal crossings with little resistance. Now, border crossings have become more difficult. Checkpoints inside of the cities have caused many to resort to smuggling across various borders. Mohammed discussed Syria's borders with its neighboring countries as individual entities, each embedded with geopolitics that varied over time. He called Syria's border with Lebanon the most dangerous due to checkpoints between Damascus and Beirut, its small length, and because "you have to go um through the mountains and take your road back through villages... it's like walking through a mine field" (Mohammed, 2015). Because of this, he said civilians rarely cross this border. Because of its extensive length (800-900 kilometers), the Turkish border is more difficult to control. In addition, the Turkish government has sided with the Syrian people. As a result, the Turkish border with its thirteen border crossing points is much more fluid and easier to cross. Mohammed explained that Syria's border with Jordan is completely different:

The Jordanian-Syrian borders, it's totally one hundred percent controlled by the, by the Jordanian government. No one or nothing goes in and out unless the Jordanian intelligence knows about it... They like, they watch everything. Like the trucks go to a special warehouse [where] all the aid goes to before going to Syria... Even like with people who like who want to [cross, go] through the Jordanian intelligence (Mohammed, 2015).

The Iraqi border is a mix. Mohammed said that half of the Iraqi border is controlled but the other half is more porous because of its affiliation with local tribes.

Despite difficulties crossing many of these borders, Mohammed suggested that smuggling persists as a secondary option. Smuggling, however, relies on connections and these connections are more important than money. Mohammed explained:

Even if you have money, you need *connections*. Money without connections cannot really help you. And now, even money with connections like, it's like so hard to get anyone out... If someone is wanted by the government, the only way for them to get out it like smuggle either like to the south... or like he has to smuggle all the way um let's say to Turkey. Um yeah, it depends on which area he is (Mohammed, 2015).

Therefore, connections and to a lesser extent, money, are non-traditional borders that prevent or aid movement across international borders. Mohammed also recognized sex, gender, and age as socioeconomic borders. To summarize, he said that women and children have an easier time crossing borders but noted that the journey is extremely difficult, particularly through mountainous areas (Mohammed, 2015).

Mohammed mentioned two other non-traditional borders: opposition- and government-controlled areas and checkpoints. These informal borders are not always visible but can be extremely dangerous. Mohammed described them here:

I mean between any, between any opposition controlled area or regime are, there are like borders. Um so like to get out, it depends on which area you are in. So there are areas that are totally [controlled] by the regime. The way to get out mainly is to pay money for the checkpoint... [Not Audible] connections to leave this area or to build like a tunnel... In Damascus... people will try to leave crossing like, like walking through all of the military based, which is like, I would say five to eight kilometers to cross... ninety percent of the time, people just get killed by, by the military when they were like trying to leave through this route (Mohammad, 2015).

These informal borders vary across the landscape. Mohammed used an example of a map to describe space controlled by informal borders:



When we do mapping, we have like two parties and each party is like given a color, a different color... you have it light and dark. The dark color is like a city where it is like totally controlled like one hundred percent. Like by the party, like ISIS. And then you'll have the lighter color around which is like, which is like empty areas like desert or like areas where the country is occupied by the party. It's not that there's a checkpoint like every mile but you might, when you cross into those areas, you know it's like ISIS territory even if you don't like see, you know, anyone around (Mohammed, 2015).

Mohammed's insight revealed international borders as dynamic and evolutionary. Each of Syria's borders is unique and affects individuals attempting to cross them in different ways. Informal borders such as connections, money, gender, controlled areas, and checkpoints, however, were just as prominent in our conversation.

### Eva's Story

Eva is an American researcher working for a start-up NGO in Amman, Jordan. Our interview centered on local needs and control, IDP movement, and borders. Her organization focuses on needs assessments and aid program evaluations in Syria and data dispersal to humanitarian aid organizations. She said that the common stance in a conflict like Syria is that any data is good data. The goal of her organization is to collect better and the most recent data to help humanitarian organizations distribute aid most effectively. Her organization's data are collected from an extensive network of 500 doctors, councilman, activists, journalists, and others on the ground in Syria. The network communicates most effectively on the Internet (Eva, 2015).

Eva's research predominantly focuses on the Syrian governorate, Idlib because:

What is needed differs extremely by locale... the flow of resources is restricted essentially by whoever's in control, political control. So one thing you'll see in both Idlib and Aleppo is that, a village that is connected to a city has all of it's water, electricity, access to food... controlled by whoever is controlling the roads around that place... needs are constantly changing based on these sort of political agendas (Eva, 2015).

In Idlib, for example, Eva reported that the most pressing needs are food, water, and medical care. Food is difficult to distribute locally because the roads are controlled or often destroyed

from bombing. Villages that have been cut off from water have to rely on alternative water supplies such as digging new wells. Medical care is a priority because of the continued bombing within the governorate. She advises her clients to specifically address these problems.

Dangerous and desperate conditions in Idlib have caused many to flee to Turkey. Others stay that are involved in the fighting or want to witness and document the disastrous events in Syria. Eva adds, “Most people who have gone to other countries have gone. And the people that are left are people who don’t have the resources. So they’re just kind of moving around trying not to get bombed” (Eva, 2015). As a result, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) is on the rise.

Another part of Eva’s job is to predict and track the increased IDP movements. IDP movements often cross internal and international borders. In Idlib, however, Eva has found unexpected patterns:

In terms of movement and borders, one thing that has been particularly interesting and frustrating to us is that IDP movements are, in a lot of these places, circular because... the bombing patterns are pretty... predictable... Generally, what people will do instead of... becoming immediately displaced to another governorate or another country with the hope that bombing will be like a couple of days, they’ll be displaced into the surrounding farmlands... But the problem is that organizations who are attempting to provide aid to them don’t necessarily know that. So all of the population numbers are super wrong (Eva, 2015).

Attempting to understand IDP movement is critical to aid dispersal. In Eva’s role, however, the stories and reasons behind particular movements is not collected:

This is one thing that I wish we had, which is the narrative of how you decide to leave a place. Because mostly, people will tell us they’re IDPs and then we ask them why they are displaced and they say because of the bombing... But there’s been bombing for a long time so I wish we had the narrative to kind of give... a backstory on that (Eva, 2015).

Her work is strictly based on IDP numbers and demographics, not individual stories. She noted that most of the IDPs in her research district were women and children.

Eva's commentary on Syria's borders and internationally displaced refugees was limited because her research agenda stops at the border. If individuals decide to leave Syria, proximity to the border is a strong deciding factor. Eva's generalized that "Aleppo and Idlib go to Turkey... Damascus and around Damascus go to Lebanon and Daraa goes to Jordan" (Eva, 2015). Eva briefly referenced relaxed border geopolitics in medical emergencies:

Governorates that are on borders, so the Turkish border, the Lebanese border, and Jordanian border have extended possibilities for medical care... almost all of those borders are accepting cases of extreme need [such as a] medical emergency. Even Lebanon which sort of hates accepting anything coming over the border at the moment (Eva, 2015).

She also remarked that as a humanitarian researcher asking about borders creates distrust, even though her organization is not politically affiliated. For example, IDPs that crossed into Turkey and back into Syria because of road closures evaded her questions on the ease of mobility and fluidity of the border (Eva, 2015).

The majority of our border conversation revolved around non-traditional borders such as roads, local knowledge, and language. Control of roads highly influences access to and the distribution of aid to particular places. Who's in control of the roads directs the flow of resources from cities to villages. Roads also impact the mobility of individuals (Eva, 2015). One of Eva's examples concerns road checkpoints:

If you're trying to leave a city that's government of Syria control or even go on a road that's government of Syria controlled, they write down your name... and disseminate it to other checkpoints... Basically, you have to come back to the city. Otherwise, you are said to be joining the opposition or doing something illegal... This applied to people who are like students who have to travel in and out of their city. And so, it's just like this means of keeping tabs on people (Eva, 2015).

Amidst the control of the roads, aid organizations have access to most areas:

Aid... gets into areas controlled by pretty much every armed group with the exception of the Islamic State who provides their own aid by taking it from other people... There are

ways to get along any road as an aid provider. It's just a matter of finessing it with the group in control of that road (Eva, 2015).

Eva also cited local knowledge as barrier or bridge, a non-traditional border. She said that local knowledge is more important than GIS and navigation mapping because many of the most optimal roads are not available or not mapped (Eva, 2015). She continued:

Local knowledge in this kind of conflict is so valuable and also, everyone's afraid of it because there's this fear... [that all Syrians] must have some agenda... Local knowledge in aid provision may be like one of these non-traditional borders where... you get these foreign run initiatives that are delivering aid but it's totally ad hoc or they just get lost or just dump aid wherever they end up (Eva, 2015).

As a result, local knowledge and roads go hand in hand in terms of aid delivery. Similar to borders, roads and local knowledge prohibit and permit the movement of goods and mobility of people.

Language is another non-traditional border cited by Eva because of its impact on humanitarian work and the media. In her work, Eva comes across many languages in the area, including: English, Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, and Persian. Eva is fluent in English and Arabic and has had a difficult time conducting research in Kurdish territory. In addition, language barriers have impacted information flows from western media:

The thing about information flows is the information that flows the most widely is often in English, whether or not it's correct... So there's a lot of re-quoting of not entirely factual information because it was published in English... This is something we've seen a lot which is quite scary actually... even like very basic stuff like... three hospitals were bombed in X town and just getting the town wrong... It has a long to do with language barriers... especially, Arabic to English (Eva, 2015).

Language borders inhibit data collection and the flows of information, whether it's correct or not.

### Hannah's Story

Hannah's story began over a year ago when she took a GIS internship working in Zaatari refugee camp for two international NGOs. She renewed her six-month contract with a promotion

to GIS Officer. Her job description includes mapping camp infrastructure and conducting needs assessments within the camp. Hannah is a personal colleague and helped organize four interviews. The day of our interview Hannah had piloted a participatory mapping project to assess perceived safety in the camp. Our interview focused on the camp itself, borders in- and outside the camp, and experiences of safety.

Safety quickly became a major theme in my interview with Hannah due to her participatory mapping assessment with four demographic groups: boys (ages 12-17), girls (ages 12-17), adult men, and adult women. In the assessment, she asked “about perceptions of safety, and mapping... where people feel [safe], where people don’t feel safe and why” (Hannah, 2015). The project began with a pilot group of adult women who expressed significant concerns about going out in the camp at night. Hannah continued:

Either they will not walk alone when it’s dark and some, just not at all even if they were accompanied by a brother or other relative... It’s also a cultural thing for women to not really be out after a certain time... because there are a lot more men out at night or you, there’s a lack of lighting so you can’t really see. So in that sense... they feel more unsafe during that time (Hannah, 2015).

Besides time of day, the women in her focus group cited several areas of concern or areas that lack perceived safety. These areas included the main road circling the camp, crowded roads such as Market Street—the main drag for buying and selling goods, and the main entrance of the camp. Hannah also speculated that proximity to home was a key factor in perceived safety because “most people are situated, living around family and people they know really well... and also, they have other family members around if something were to happen... they’re not alone” (Hannah, 2015). In regards to relative safety in the home, Hannah said that having a caravan versus a tent is more secure because it can be locked from the inside. A tent cannot be locked. However, she also noted that in terms of actual safety, she didn’t think there was a difference

between the two. In a separate child assessment study, Hannah concluded that distance was directly correlated to safety and school attendance. The study found decreased enrollment rates as distance to school increased and safety of a traveling child decreased.

She mentioned the initial reluctance of Syrians in the camp to participate in the safety assessment because the community police funded it. There are several policing entities in the camp and in Jordan. She said some are official, some are international, and some are secret. Hannah used the word “wary” several times to recall Syrians’ feelings of the police. Some are worried because rules against smuggling or tapping into electricity aren’t always followed. She said people worry about saying something wrong and possibly losing their shelter or solely because “they’re coming from a civil war where their government is bombing them” (Hannah, 2015). Overall, she recognized distrust for police and authority personnel within the camp.

When I specifically asked about her personal perception of safety in the camp, Hannah was steadfast that she had not felt unsafe but perhaps, uncomfortable when she first arrived. She then backtracked and recalled a particular moment when she was walking through the camp with four other foreign women. She said:

Having five females, foreign females together drew a lot of attention and like kids, boys, you know, were surrounding us and like trying to touch us - not in any like sexual way [they] just wanted, I don’t know, to push their... Kids are bold... It was a lot of kids. It was a lot of boys. And I, I did not feel very safe actually at the moment. I mean but nothing happened (Hannah, 2015).

She noted that she is not allowed to walk alone in the camp without a male, Jordanian staff member present. She also expanded that the residents of the camp are very welcoming and friendly and often ask her in for tea or dinner. Hannah summarized her personal safety:

I think it’s generally a safe place to be in but then again, I’m only there during the day and you know, I’m never there when it’s dark and I’m always accompanied by a, usually a male Jordanian staff person. So I guess that’s coming from, you know, from a sort of privileged point of view in terms of my safety (Hannah, 2015).

One of Hannah's other duties is to continually update maps of camp infrastructure such as the locations of mosques, schools (formal and informal), health facilities, wash centers, kitchens, stores and housing locations. Zaartari camp is nearly at capacity and is no longer accepting Syrians unless for family reunification or medical purposes. However, she said the camp is dynamic and constantly changing. For instance, people are endlessly moving shelters to different areas or districts within the camp to be closer to family or are moving into new more permanent housing such as caravans with a septic tanks. Movement varies based on camp location:

There's twelve districts in the camp... There's what they call "old camp" which is like, like five districts that have been there the longest and so those are definitely more stable. Populations don't really fluctuate, you know, the number of people don't really go in and out as much of those districts because they are more permanent (Hannah, 2015).

Family was an important theme related to movement, stability, and safety across camp Zaartari's internal borders. Hannah's population and household assessments recorded six as the average family size. However, each household could consist of multiple families. Household enclaves share at least two caravans or tents and heighten perceived safety.

In addition to internal mobility, Syrians are also externally mobile whether to work or visit relatives in host communities:

It's very fluid. People are also leaving the camp and coming and going quite frequently. You can get, you know, day or week passes to go out of the camp and then come back. It's now starting to get warmer weather, so I think more people are coming back that left during the winter (Hannah, 2015).

Some refugees even leave to go back to Syria. Hannah estimated that a few hundred go back to Syria every week. She said that camp rules state, "once you go back, once you've been in Jordan and you go back to Syria, you're not allowed to come back to Jordan" (Hannah, 2015). She

continues, “I don’t know how they do it. But... people have come back and I’m not sure if it’s as easy now as it used to be” (Hannah, 2015).

Fluidity of camp borders also supports the smuggling of goods and services such as wedding dresses, arcade games, technology, and food in and out of the camp. Loose rules and smuggling have created a vast informal economy within the camp. The informal economy coalesces on Market Street where “there’s a huge array of different types of shops... There are tailors, welders, bicycle repair shops, [and] arcades... Syrians are quite an educated population. So some of them were doctors and lawyers” and with money were able to open up shops (Hannah, 2015). Hannah speculates that the inter-workings of Market Street are also entrenched in politics. Although limited, Market Street and surrounding host communities provide some jobs and opportunities for Syrian refugees.

As mentioned, camp Zaartari is no longer accepting Syrian refugees. The latest waves of Syrians crossing into Jordan are directed to camp Azraq, the new primary refugee facility. But first, Syrians must cross the border at Rwayshid, the only open border crossing. Refugees are processed at the Jordanian transit center and those that choose it, are moved to Azraq (Hannah, 2015). In reference to this border crossing point, Hannah remarked:

I’ve never been there. I don’t know much about it but... I mean there’s not much there. Like there’s no housing for people, yet people... have to spend several nights there in some instances waiting to be let through (Hannah, 2015).

The border and this transit center are important to many Syrian stories.

### **Fateh and Baraq’s Story**

Fateh and Baraq are colleagues who work for an international NGO in Jordan in camp Zaartari. Similar to Hannah, they are both involved in mapping the changing internal structure of the refugee camp. They are both Jordanian and non-native English speakers. They opted to



interview through email and worked together on their responses, which is why I present their stories together. For the interview, I emailed them sets of questions and they would discuss and reply with their collective answers. Hannah directed me to the duo because of their extensive insight into Syria's border with Jordan. Our conversation centered on Syrian life in- and outside of Syria, borderlands, and border crossings. I present their information as a journey, from inside Syria to outside.

The ongoing conflict in Syria has created harsh and dangerous conditions for many people living in the country. Baraq said, "Villages, cities which are under the siege by the regime caused an intense suffering for the people who happen to live there" (2015). Desperation has forced many Syrians to leave their homes. Fateh explained:

Daily life in Syria is horrible and not stable at all, because there is conflict and shelling by airstrike or whatever, and the prices of food and none food items and every goods are increased, the service is going down, in many areas inside Syria there is lack of food, medicine, water... All of these things affect on their life and force them to leave their areas and their staff, and heading to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq (Fateh, 2015).

The journey to cross borders and leave Syria is not an easy one. In total, the journey may take up to nine or ten days. Before even reaching the border to Jordan, Syrians from the south often face and must surpass many non-traditional borders such as distance, extremist groups, and money:

[There] is the distance between the Syrian villages (Dar'a and Quneitera) and Jordan borders, and there are extremist groups on that villages... The Villages from Dar'a-Izra' to the Beir Qasab in the south way in Syria are controlled by the Bedwin Clans, and that considers a barrier for the civilians because they have to pay for them and the most of civilians do not have a money to pay, so at the result they can't get to Jordan (Fateh, 2015).

Prior to 2014, there were four border crossing points on the Syrian-Jordanian border which included, Nassib, Tall Shihab, Ar ramtha, and Rwayshid. Beginning in 2014, three of the border crossings closed with the exception of Rwayshid. Fahed expanded, "all of these borders are closed except Rwayshid border and that is because of Jordanian government decision" based

on the number of refugees and related security issues (2015). The closing of borders had severe effects on individuals at the border:

In the first three months of 2014, the reception of refugees was stopped but the special cases like.. pregnant, injured people, and chronic disease. And that situation affected on gathering a huge number of refugees on the Jordanian border waiting to enter to Jordan, and they spent some days on the desert in area called Al elayyaneh (Fateh, 2015).

Baraq elaborated with an example:

Today around 1000 IDPs are waiting in the desert along the border with Jordan. People live in tents which are distributed by the Red crescent Organization or some other tents which materials are handed out by the Jordanian army... In addition, the government of Jordan have made all arrangement to secure as medical services to Refugees at the border serving around 200 children, and many elders from men and women (Baraq, 2015).

Camps have formed in this borderland and many Syrians live in this limbo of space for weeks.

Baraq (2015) noted that a group of “refugees waited 20 days at the border and around 400 of them were allowed to enter Jordan.” There are additional “displaced people living in tents, rental houses and with host families in the Syrian border areas near to Turkey waiting their turn to get inside Turkey” (Baraq, 2015). Borderslands, however, are not always secure. According to Baraq, safety is an issue:

It’s worth to mention that generally civilians at the camp don’t feel secure enough staying in the desert area. There is a lot of fear of being roped [raped] or attached by mops [mobs] that do exist nearby. One example, of some individual who were not allowed to enter the Jordanian territory, they have triggered some problems in the camp destabilizing the situation by terrifying innocent women and children (Baraq, 2015).

Illegally crossing the border into Jordan is not an option. In fact, “the number of people who show on the Jordanian borders have decreased because Syrian people heard that Jordan is almost no longer receiving refugees” so many remain as IDPs or choose to cross a different border into Turkey, Iraq, and Lebanon (Baraq, 2015). Baraq (2015) reiterated, “getting inside Jordan illegally, no, not a chance.”

I asked Fateh and Baraq to compare Syria's border with Jordan to the Iraqi, Turkish, and Lebanese borders. The common thread between all of these borders was control. The fluidity of each border depended on *who* is actually in control. ISIS, for example, has played a significant role in controlling the Iraqi and Turkish borders. Baraq described each border separately:

Iraq border are a little bit different than Jordan border regarding to the controlling of ISIS to some of the crossing borders in both sides (Syria and Iraq) which means that there is no control on what ISIS is doing there and no one can use these crossing borders but them, also ISIS use these crossing borders as a supply roads and areas between their controlling areas in Syria and Iraq. And all of that scared people to flee into Iraq. Despite of all whats happening there some displaced people get inside Iraq by crossing a river using boats without letting anyone knows about it (Baraq, 2015).

He continued:

Some of the [Turkish] crossing borders are being controlled by ISIS from the Syrian side and by the Turkish regime from the other side, which means that the Turkish government is keeping their eyes open to control the security situation out there and they keep these crossing borders closed, but when we talj about the other crossing borders which are being controlled by The opposition party or The Syrian regime are tottaly different according to the good connections between the opposition party and the Turkish regime. Turkey is recieving refugees but also few numbers... So some of the Turkish borders are similar to the Jordanian borders and some are completely different (Baraq, 2015).

He could not comment specifically on the Lebanese border. Overall, Baraq (2015) used the word “unstable” to describe the overall border situation because each border is significantly different based on the proclaimed authority—ISIS, opposition groups, Syrian regime, or Turkish government—at the border or a specific border crossing point.

If allowed to cross the Syrian-Jordanian border, individuals are then transferred to by the Jordanian military to Raba' Al Sarhan to be processed. The United Nations supplies new refugees with water, food, and clothing as processing may take a few days. Processing includes an eye scan for identification purposes and a UNHCR refugee card. I inquired further about privacy issues and Baraq (2015) responded, “No people don't have problems with the eye print.”

The eye scan effectively prevents Syrians from crossing the border twice (Baraq, 2015). In this sense, the eye scan becomes its own informal border preventing or accelerating mobility.

After registration and the eye scan, refugees are then transferred to either camp Zaatari or Azraq for an indefinite amount of time.

Life in a refugee camp is not luxurious. To put it bluntly, “life in Zaatari SUCKS!!”

(Baraq, 2015). Baraq further detailed the conditions within the camp:

Refugees live in tents and caravans which are being extremely hot during summer days and very cold and unsafe during the cold weather, and there is no income sources for refugees inside Zaatari camp but the vouchers they receive and working with NGOs inside the camp or self employment. Refugees are always complaining about how bad the services are. It's a refugee camp located in desert you are free to imagine the situation. Eventually people used on the current situation and they are living their lives (Baraq, 2015).

The camp itself has its own border. Individuals can leave the camps by applying for a pass to return. Syrians return to their homeland for various reasons. Baraq (2015) explained one reason:

“There is a big number of returnees who went back from Zaatari camp to Syria after the huge victories made by the opposition party in Dar'a governorate and now most of Dar'a villages are being under the opposition control.” Returnees, however, must stay in Syria for at least six months before returning to Jordan. The non-traditional borders of the refugee camps in Jordan are controlled by this returnee registration process. The eye scan reinforces this border.

### Amal's Story

Amal is a Syrian physician specially trained in pathology. He taught at the Aleppo School of Medicine before the revolution began. His wife is also a physician, and together they have a young daughter. Amal played an important role as a physician throughout the revolution, often working for one or both sides of the conflict. He currently works for a US-based NGO in Turkey.

Amal provided the written narrative of his story through email. His story centers on safety, family, mobility and his experiences as a physician during the crisis.

Amal was not active at the beginning of the revolution because of previous brutal experiences with the Syrian regime. A significant event called him to the field:

After the famous ‘Central Square’ massacre in my own city Homes, I found myself obligated to help the civilians and work secretly in local field hospitals. People did not trust going to the governmental hospitals, fearing of arrest, torture, and even execution. I continued to work secretly, while the situation continued to get worse. The peaceful revolution slowly started to turn into what looks like a Civil War... (Ahman, 2015).

The Civil War erupted through his city with continued shooting and bombings. Fear was evident in his household too. He said:

My wife... had to quit her laboratory specialty training, and my daughter, who was only two and half years old, could not stop crying every time she heard a shooting or a bomb near our own. For those reasons and other, I had to make my wife and daughter flee the country toward UAE in May 2013 (Ahman, 2015).

Amal’s wife and daughter crossed Syria’s border alone as Amal stayed behind to continue providing medical aid.

Eventually, the Syrian regime took over his city, which he called the “most active war zone” (Amal, 2015). Total siege limited Amal’s mobility and he was “unable to move in and out easily” (Amal, 2015). Regime control acted as an informal border preventing his movement.

With restricted mobility, Amal continued to work as a physician in the field. As a medical physician, he felt obligated to aid both sides of the revolution. His dual responsibility, however, was difficult in practice:

While medically helping both sides of the war felt the right thing to do, this very issue placed additional pressure on me. Not only I had to avoid disclosing my [role] in helping the rebels from the government, but also I had to face increasing scrutiny from the rebels because of my help to the other side, namely the *Shahiba*, [government thugs] (Amal, 2015).

Aiding both sides was also extremely dangerous and forced Amal to flee. He said:

I received multiple threat letters, not only concerning myself, but also concerning my parents and my siblings. In fact I was physically hurt in one incident. Eventually, the pressure pile so high on me, I had no other way to survive except running away, and so I did. I secretly managed to travel to Turkey (Amal, 2015).

In Turkey, Amal began working with an international NGO and continued his work as a physician helping Syrians abroad. Although Amal left Syria, a part of himself remains transnational. He ended his story with this sentiment:

Although I have physically moved out of the country, but my heart and soul remain attached there, where I have the rest of my family suffering the daily bombardment and shooting from the Syrian government (Amal, 2015).

## Discussion

Although each story varies greatly, as a whole, the seven stories cover the breadth of the Syrian crisis, from displacement within Syria to fluctuating international borders to life abroad as a Syrian refugee. Several topics are apparent in these seven stories, including: mobility, activism, safety, family, and control. Through a critical feminist lens, I place these stories and broad themes in the context of traditional and non-traditional borders studies and literature on the body. The identification of borders and bodies in each interview provides the foundation for re-mapping and re-symbolizing all borders and border crossing experiences.

The Peace of Westphalia recognized defined space and promoted state-centric thinking that all borders are equal and rigid, a recognition that has persisted into the twenty-first century (Diener and Hagen, 2012). While international relations theory and maps remain trapped in this “Westphalian” way of thinking, these stories prove otherwise (Agnew, 1994 and 2009).

Although Syria’s international borders are prominent features in each story, the borders discussed in the stories are not equal. Some borders are rigid and some are fluid, while others are continuously changing. Each story further debunks John Agnew’s *territorial trap* concept of

fixed, rigid boundaries and separation between internal and external affairs (Agnew, 1994 and 2009).

Syria's borders have a rich and dynamic history and continue to flux and evolve today because of the internal conflict, geopolitics between neighboring countries, and impact of transnational organizations such as ISIS. The borders straddle the paradox of securitization due to conflict and openness due to globalization as they continuously change (Jones, 2012: 5-12; Agnew, 1994: 77). The evolution of Syria's borders over time is a major theme present in Adiba, Mohammed, Fateh, and Baraq's stories. Adiba (2015), for example, focuses on the complexity of Syria's borders and the political undertones surrounding each border. Syria's rocky history with Lebanon, for example, directly affects Lebanon's acceptance of Syrian refugees, whereas Turkey continues to accept displaced Syrians, at least for the time being (Adiba, 2015). Mohammed (2015) discusses the increased difficulty crossing borders now compared to his escape in 2011, the beginning of the revolution. He continues that as borders tighten and options are few, smuggling across borders is a last resort for many Syrians, especially if he or she is wanted at the border. Fateh and Baraq (2015) detail the Jordanian closing of three official border crossings points and its effects on Syrian refugees trying to leave. Baraq (2015) specifically uses the word "unstable" to describe Syria's international border situation. Instability illuminates the present state of Syria's borders and reflects Agnew's dissatisfaction with traditional border thinking. These stories demonstrate that each border is not fixed or equal. Instead, Syria's borders are temporally dynamic and geopolitically uneven with the rise of fleeing refugees, geopolitical decisions, smuggling, and transnational groups.

Aid delivery and refugee movement across borders disprove the notion that borders strictly separate internal and external affairs. Humanitarian aid provided by Adiba's organization

relies on cross-border activity even though it has become more difficult over time (Adiba, 2015). Eva (2015) describes IDP movements that temporarily cross borders into Turkey and then return to Syria. Fateh, Baraq, and Hannah (2015; 2015) discuss registered refugees in Jordan returning to Syria after opposition groups re-take southern cities and Mohammed (2015) explains his role as an activist involved in media within Syria as well as his continued efforts from the outside. These scenarios do not present a clear separation of internal and external affairs and would not be possible if there was a defined delineation.

Globalization—economic, technological, cultural, and political changes that increase multi-scalar interconnections—directly impacts traditional borders (Croucher, 2014: 13). Non-state actors such as opposition groups, terrorists, humanitarian aid organizations, and international coalitions disrupt the traditional organization of the world by state boundaries (Popescu, 2014). These transnational actors decrease the power of state borders and re-define borders. Although Syria remains internationally bordered, internal borders of control have emerged in light of non-state actors. These internal borders are informal, whilst their authority is publically recognized and at times, feared. Eva (2015) details the control of cities and the surveillance of mobile bodies at road checkpoints. The names of individuals such as students leaving regime-controlled areas are recorded, a process that forces them to return (Eva, 2015). Mohammed (2015) compares controlled areas to gradating area symbols on a map. On-the-ground authority may vary from cities to desert areas, but these controlled areas may be visible or invisible barriers encountered across the landscape. Syrians in cities under siege face these initial informal borders before ever reaching traditional, international borders (Fateh and Baraq, 2015). In this way, Mohammed (2015) likens controlled areas to dangerous non-traditional borders.



Borderlands—areas in proximity to the border, which constitute a transition zone between two distinct categories—are evident in Fateh, Baraq, and Mohammed’s stories (Newman, 2011: 37). These border regions remain undefined and are spaces of inclusion and exclusion (Newman, 2011: 37). For many Syrians trying to escape, the border regions are spaces of transition and temporary home. Baraq (2015) explains that the closing of Jordanian borders has profound impacts on fleeing Syrians. Thousands of people camp in the desert along the Jordanian border for an indefinite amount of time awaiting acceptance into Jordan. Although aid is distributed into this border region, safety is a major concern (Baraq, 2015). Syrians remain in a state of limbo because they are neither included nor excluded from the political units on either side. Instability forces Syrians to flee, yet security issues prevent them from entering Jordan. In addition, Mohammed (2015) mentions communities on Syria’s borders that help with safe passage and smuggling. These communities in the border land play a significant part in the interconnectivity across each side.

As I alluded to, borders are not naturally occurring phenomenon. They are social and political constructions ingrained in discourse (Rumford, 2012). Despite the conflict within Syria’s borders, both Mohammed and Amal sentimentally value their homeland. Mohammed (2015) joined the anti-government movement at the beginning of the revolution because he felt that Syria was the “best place to be” and now that he has escaped, he regrets leaving his country, his family, and the revolution behind. Amal remained in Syria because he felt obligated as a physician to help his people—both members of the regime and the opposition. At the end of his interview, Amal expresses that his body is currently safe in Turkey, but a part of him, perhaps his heart or identity, remains within Syria’s borders. Borders are not only political, they are “imagined communities” and sources of identity, regardless of conflict and danger (Anderson,

2006). The Syrian border is a part of Mohammed and Amal's embodied identity and further represents, their homeland.

In addition to the geopolitical context of international borders, it must not be forgotten that traditional borders are also experienced and performed by individuals. Guidice and Guibilaro (2015: 84-85) use the term *borderscape* to describe the individual realities, complexities, and performances of borders and Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002: 335-339) rely on a multitude of perspectives and interpretations of borders, border crossings, and the states in their collection of email interviews. The interviewees in this study view international borders in different ways and from different perspectives. For example, Adiba (2015) describes the Syrian-Turkish border as "fluid or porous," the Syrian-Lebanese border as "unpredictable," and the Syrian-Jordanian border as "very temperamental... [and] finicky." Mohammed's (2015) viewpoint is slightly different. For example, he calls the Lebanese border the "most dangerous" because "it's like walking through a mine field," the Turkish border the least controlled, the Jordanian border completely controlled, and the Iraqi border a "mix" (Mohammed, 2015). In contrast, Fateh and Baraq (2015) focus their attention on the control of borders by opposition (ISIS) and governmental groups, whereas, Amal (2015) barely mentions the border. As Syrians that have both fled, Mohammed and Amal's perspectives differ from each other as well as differ from remaining perspectives. Subjective experience and individual positionality in each story provide critical perspectives of border performances and the bodies that interact with them.

All seven interviewees directly or indirectly extend the conversation to non-traditional borders defined by Lena Nare (2012: 363) as "contact spaces" of social interaction. Marco Antonsich (2011: 424) further defines non-traditional borders as unmeasureable, socio-spatial

territory. These visible or invisible barriers create socially defined spaces that limit the mobility or personal sovereignty of the body.

Some of the non-traditional borders present in these stories are clearly defined by the interviewee as a barrier or boundary. Eva (2015), for example, specifically notes local knowledge as “one of these non-traditional borders.” Gender and sex borders are evident in Hannah’s story because women’s perceptions of safety and cultural expectations impede their personal mobility (Hannah, 2015). This informal border, however, is not initially recognizable at a surficial level, and must be teased out at an analytical level guided by literature. The non-traditional borders mentioned below are a mix of these methods.

Adiba, Mohammed, and Hannah cite sex, gender, and age as non-traditional borders. Adiba and Mohammed both mention the relative ease of women and children crossing international borders compared to young men. Adiba (2015) comments that women are advised, “if you want to come to Europe, make sure you have one of your children” with you. She continues that young, adult men are greater security risks and are less apt to return, so they are more restricted when it comes to crossing borders. Mohammed (2015) agrees with this notion of women’s greater mobility but recognizes the difficult journey in store for many of them. Hannah’s (2015) perspective of gendered borders shifts to refugee camps in Jordan where many women avoid leaving their homes at night and feel unsafe in crowded streets during the day. Besides the cultural restriction of Syrian women’s mobility in public spaces, darkness and the household are additional informal borders restricting women’s movement. It is not customary for women to move about at night unaccompanied by a male relative and generally, women feel the safest in close proximity to home and family (Hannah, 2015). In addition, the physical structure of the home—tents and caravans—is also a border. Hannah presumes that perceived safety is

greater in sturdier types of homes such as caravans because they can be locked; whereas, a tent cannot be locked and is more vulnerable to extreme conditions such as inclement weather.

Socio-economic borders such as affluence, occupation, money, and connections are also non-traditional borders discussed by Fateh, Baraq, Adiba, Mohammed, and Hannah. Many Syrians trying to escape are stopped by different groups—opposition, governmental, and tribal groups—that extort money for safe passage (Fateh and Baraq, 2015). Fateh and Baraq (2015) acknowledge that a lack of money prevents many Syrians from fleeing to Jordan. Adiba (2015) specifically examines the roles of affluence and transferable occupations as loose determinants of success after leaving Syria. While affluence and transferable occupations or training can get a refugee further away, Hannah also notes that life outside of Syria, particularly in Jordan, is often extremely expensive and many run out of means to survive. Money but more so, familial connections are important themes in Mohammed's story. Mohammed's connections helped him out of prison and aided his escape (Mohammed, 2015). Money is also important to the success of refugees in Zaartari refugee camp. Hannah (2015) postulates that start-up capital is essential for opening up shop on Market Street. These socio-economic factors act as barriers preventing or allowing movement across controlled areas or international borders as well as limiting or supporting opportunities outside of Syria.

Eva (2015) presents three unique non-traditional borders not mentioned in the other stories. They include roads, local knowledge, and language. Roads are instrumental to actors—opposition groups, terrorists, and the regime—involved in the Syrian conflict. Roads control mobility and as such, controlling roads is a significant part of controlling a stretch of land or a city. Barriers and checkpoints control the movement of aid, people, and opposing groups. Local knowledge is needed to navigate the complex borders of controlled and bombed roads. Local

knowledge in the humanitarian community is also advantageous for tracking IDP movement with local networks. Without local knowledge, aid distribution is less efficient. The Kurdish language is another border or impediment in Eva's story because she works in Arabic and English. In addition, the dominance of English publications heightens the risk of poorly translated materials and misinformation circulated in the West. The English language supports the spread of information but the translation process acts as a border, restricting accurate information to the masses. Miscommunication due to language barriers is prominent (Eva, 2015).

Refugee camps, particularly Zaartari in Jordan, present another informal border. Hannah talks about the camp and its infrastructure at length, focusing on the fluidity within the boundaries of the camp. Even though registration at the camp has declined, tents and caravans are constantly on the move as individual families move into new housing or closer to family members. Hannah (2015) calls the camp a little "city" where any type of good can be found. The camp, however, is by no means luxurious. Baraq (2015) notes, "life in Zaartari SUCKS!!"

Internally, the camp remains in flux but externally an informal border binds the camp. According to Hannah, Baraq, and Fateh, Syrians must apply for a pass to leave the camp. Many Syrians, Hannah recounts 100 per week, leave the camp to go into nearby cities or to go back to Syria. Attaining a pass may take a week or up to a month (Baraq, 2015). Syrians that return to Syria are not immediately allowed back into Jordan. Hannah, Baraq, and Fateh present differing time frames (six months or not at all) for returnees. Several other non-traditional borders such as the eye scan are found in Zaartari, but the bounds of the camp appear similar to the traditional interpretation of borders. Like international borders, a "passport" is required to cross at a particular point, the camp registration entrance. While some smuggling takes place, the internal

and external affairs of the camp appear neatly separated. The border of Zaartari publically defines and simplifies the identity of individuals within as refugees.

The body—surificially, the physical body of hands, legs, and torso—is a non-traditional border than can be transgressed in various ways. The physical body is a border that can be threatened and injured. Mohammed’s body and safety, along with his brother’s, is threatened before his escape (Mohammed, 2015). Amal’s body is physically harmed because of his physician work aiding both sides of the revolution (Amal, 2015). Hannah’s bodily border is threatened, but not injured, in her uncomfortable encounter with young boys (Hannah, 2015). The body can also be bound by a perspective or viewpoint such as Adiba’s limited perspective as a Syrian-American citizen. Given her positionality, Adiba’s perspective limited and bordered. In sum, the body not only crosses borders but also is its own, bordered entity.

The physical, surficial body and the fully encompassing body are present in each interview. Each interviewee provides subjective details of their individual understandings and experiences of borders and border crossings. Mohammed and Amal directly experience borders in their stories as Syrian refugees that have fled to the US and Turkey. Although the remaining interviewees are not displaced Syrians, their experiences as humanitarian activists in- and outside the region are incredibly enlightening and helpful in identifying borders and understanding border experiences. As such, all seven interviewees provide a unique lens or perspective on traditional and non-traditional borders. Common themes and borders are found in each story but their individual experiences remain un-aggregated.

At first, I struggled as a researcher to find a clear, thematic overlap between each story. While prepped with interview questions, each interview took it’s own course as I was forced to adapt interview questions on the fly. I quickly became acquainted with recording problems and

the discomfort caused when I prodded for more specific answers. I was initially disappointed with the unexpected results of interviewing. The transcription process, however, was a transformative moment for me in the research process. As I listened to each interview repeatedly, their individual value surfaced. Although each interview may not have overlapped, as I initially wanted, together the stories painted a larger picture, a continuous journey of border crossings.

### Comparative Analysis

To supplement these interviewees and stories and place them in a wider context, I also examine the borders and border-crossing experiences presented in Katty Alhayek's (2015) published stories of six Syrian women—Rim, Karima, Mona, Sima, Hala, and Maha. A comparative analysis between my seven collected stories and the six published stories reveals several commonalities and differences in identified borders and border related experiences.

Alhayek (2015) conducted 33 interviews and performed over a 100 hours of participant observation with Syrian women displaced in Jordan during the 2013 summer. The six stories selected for publication represent intersectional identities of Syrian women.<sup>2</sup> **Rim** is young Damascene activist from a middle class family. After her family's safety was threatened, Rim decided to cross the Syrian-Jordanian border alone. **Karima** is a housewife with five children from a lower-class Homs family. She is not an activist and abruptly became the head of household after her husband and eldest son were killed. Karima now lives in Jordan. **Mona** is from a small village in the governorate of Dara'a and was actively involved in rebel operations with the Free Syrian Army. **Sima** is a mother of six children with an extensive background in fashion and clothing design. With her lack of formal education and lower class status, however,

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<sup>2</sup> The names in these six published stories have been changed by Katty Alhayek to protect the identities of participants involved. I use *italics* to separate direct quotes from Alhayek's interviewees from Alhayek's own analysis.

Sima's work opportunities are few in Jordan. **Hala** is a young journalist from an upper-class Damascene family. Her activism and involvement in the revolution led to her arrest and torture before fleeing across the Lebanese border. **Maha** is a poor housewife from a small village in the governorate of Dara'a. She arrived in Zaatari camp alone with her seven children and faces severe economic and food insecurity while awaiting her husband. Their stories and complex identities disprove the dominant representations of Syrian refugee women (Alhayek, 2015). In each story, borders—traditional and non-traditional—are crossed and experienced and I examine them here.

All six women crossed Syria's international borders and ended up in Jordan where they were interviewed. While the Syrian-Jordanian border itself appears uniform, their individual experiences crossing the border are different. For example, after governmental forces broke into Rim's family's household and Rim's friends were arrest and tortured, she decided to leave Syria. As discussed by Eva (2015) and Mohammed (2015), Rim also feared that her name was known at the border. As such, Rim was forced to flee illegally by taking "*side-roads to avoid the regime's checkpoints alongside the main roads*" (Alhayek, 2015: 8). She left at night with a group of mostly women and children. Rim describes further:

*We were walking in orchards not knowing on what we were stepping. The Jordanian Army was at the border to help us cross into Jordan. There was a small hill that we had to climb, and a Jordanian soldier held out his hand to help us up it* (Alhayek, 2015: 8).

Mona crossed the border into Jordan with her 11-year-old daughter. Together, they left, with a group of over 1500 Syrians at night "when the regime launched an intensive bombardment of her region. They walked for four hours under the bombing to reach the Jordanian borders" (Alhayek, 2015: 15). Mona details her first experience in Jordan:



*The Jordanian army welcomed us at the border and took us via buses to the camp. When I saw the reception tent and that we will sleep on the bare ground, I was shocked. I wanted to go back to Syria* (Alhayek, 2015: 15).

Karima crossed the border after a trip lasting several weeks. At one point, she was stuck for twelve days due to road closures and bombing (Alhayek, 2015: 13). Although Rim, Mona, and Karima crossed the same border, their experiences of international borders were each unique. Rim's description of the landscape and Mona's description of her reception and regret are each a *borderscape* which seeks to better understand the complexity, experience, and performance of borders taking individual realities into account (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015: 84-85).

Similar to Mohammed (2015) and Amal (2015), Rim and Mona both find hope, solace, and regret in the land bound by Syrian borders. Syria and Syria's borders are part of their identities and their homeland. With her activist work, Mona exclaims, *"I feel that I am participating in building Syria's future"* (Alhayek, 2015: 9). After crossing the border in Jordan, Rim reminisces about the view of Qasioun Mountain from her former bedroom and says, *"When the soldier extended his hand, I wanted to pull my hand back! I wanted to go back"* (Alhayek, 2015: 8). Syria's borders are social and political constructions that have lasting impacts on identities and perceptions of home.

In addition to traditional borders, these six women experienced many non-traditional borders. The home is one such border. Karima, for example, is "from an urban poor conservative Homs environment... [her] life experiences were limited to the border of her house" (Alhayek, 2015: 13-14). After her husband's death, Karima adjusted to the head of household and was forced to interact beyond the private spaces of her home. Both Karima and Mona lost their tent homes in Zaatari refugee camp because of a severe snowstorm that hit in the winter. Karima laments that her tent is *"my life tragedy"* (Alhayek, 2015: 13). The home is also a border that can

be forced through. Regime forces broke into Sima's home and stole or destroyed all of her belongings (Alhayek, 2015: 17). The home presents its boundaries in many ways: strict divisions between public and private space and walls and doors that can be quickly taken away during a storm or broken into.

Sex and gender are significant non-traditional borders. Cultural gender norms play important roles in women's comfort in public spaces. As mentioned, Karima had little experience functioning independently in public space because of her conservative upbringing (Alhayek, 2015). In contrast, Mona is from a rural family and has experience in public space because of agricultural work. Sex and gender impact socio-spatial borders between private and public space.

Sex and gender also affect the fluidity and securitization of Syria's international borders. Maha fled Syria alone with her children because her husband needed to maintain his income. Eventually, Maha's husband tried to reunite with his family at a later date, "however, he could not pass the border because single men are not allowed to enter the Za'atri camp" (Alhayek, 2015: 23). Maha's husband was left in the borderlands of uncertainty. Syria's international borders are more porous for women and restrictive for adult men. This gender divide disrupts family reunification for security purposes.

Women carry sex and gender borders on their bodies. Sexual violence and even the threat of sexual violence breach this border. After her capture by the governmental forces, Hala was subjected to serious bouts of torture including sexual assault and the threat of rape (Alhayek, 2015). Hala explains:

*They said they would rape me! It is so difficult for a girl's psyche to be subject to all of that. They made me feel like they knew everything about my most personal life details. They threatened that they would inform my family that I was not a virgin and that I was a slut who slept with the Free Syrian Army soldiers (Alhayek, 2015: 20).*

Karima saw government troops enter her home and her first thought was her daughter's bodily safety (Alhayek, 2015). Afterwards, she expressed her frustration to a rebel group and said, "*The rebel leader told me to thank God because no one touched my daughter or me and we had escaped with our honour. He said in the nearby neighborhood most women were raped*" (Alhayek, 2015: 11 Karima). In Hala and Karima's culture, the woman's body is a border to be preserved. Women's bodies reflect honor and purity, yet are described in these stories as a battleground and border to be crossed.

Mona is the only woman in these selected stories to contribute to the armed conflict in Syria. Working for the Free Syrian Army, Mona and other women smuggled weapons and ammunition under their clothing across road checkpoints. Early in the revolution, women's bodies were not inspected because of gender barriers (Alhayek, 2015). Eventually, Mona's contribution to the rebels was uncovered and forced her to flee.

Mona's story brings up another border identified by Eva: roads. Roads are highly regulated with checkpoints and restrict the movement of individuals. Control of roads creates borders between opposition- and government-controlled areas, an important strategy in the conflict.

Women's bodily borders are not specifically recognized in my seven interviews and while women's bodies present just one type of bodily border, all bodies can face sexual and physical harm. The physical harm of men and women is evident in both sets of stories. Mohammed, for example, faced the threat of physical abuse after his two arrests and Amal was physically threatened and harmed by governmental forces. Hala was arrested with a male friend and severely tortured with various interrogation techniques. Hala's "wrists were tied with a rope behind her back and then she was suspended in the air for six hours... Yet what was most

difficult was that the intelligence agents put her friend in the facing cell where they tortured him day and night” (Alhayek, 2015: 20). The physical harm to Hala’s body is extensive. Tortured bodies represent a border crossed and individual sovereignty undone.

Money, connections, and occupations are three non-traditional borders discussed in both sets of stories. When Maha crossed the border into Jordan, “economic and food insecurity began. This situation severely affected Maha’s and her children’s physical and psychological health” (Alhayek, 2015: 23). Maha and her husband remain separated because men are not allowed to cross alone and they do not have the money to cross illegally. In contrast, two donors financially sponsor Karima, one of whom provides an apartment and schooling for Karima’s children. Maha and Karima land on either side of the monetary border. Karima has greater flexibility given her financial stability, whereas Maha continues to look for work in her husband’s absence.

Money and connections aided the release of Hala from imprisonment. While in the desperate conditions of prison, a government official recognized her and called her family. His influence, connections, and 3000 dollars allowed for her release (Alhayek, 2015). Similarly, money and connections assisted Mohammed to be released from both of his arrests, as well (Mohammed, 2015).

For many displaced Syrians, finding employment abroad is a challenge and extremely expensive. Many men, including Mona’s brothers, are forced to work illegally in poor conditions. Mona’s family can barely survive and pay the rent with her brothers’ small wages (Alhayek, 2015). In contrast, Sima is trained as a fashion designer; as a widow abroad, she utilizes her extensive background in Jordan to earn a living wage. Her job prospects, however, are limited, not by her training, but by her class status (Alhayek, 2015). Similar to the stories of Adiba (2015) and Mohammed (2015), money and transferable occupations are extremely

important to success and survival outside of Syria. With money and jobs as well as connections, Syrians can surpass these socio-spatial borders. Without them, their social mobility and well-being are limited.

More broadly, the bounds of camp Zaatari are non-traditional borders that encompass an expanse of Syrian refugees. The desperate conditions within the camp and the destruction of their homes forced Mona and Karima to *escape* the camp (Alhayek, 2015). Karima explains:

*After three months and ten days, my tent collapsed from the rain and we could not live in it anymore. I escaped from Zaatari illegally with the help of another Syrian family* (Alhayek, 2015: 13).

Mona fled the camp after only twelve days. Alhayek (2015:15) continues, “[Mona’s] family escaped Zaatari with the help of an activist group.” The word *escape* is used in both of their stories and implies a crossed border to safety and a better livelihood. The camp boundaries appear restrictive, forcing women like Mona and Karima to flee. Such an experience is similar to crossing the Syrian-Jordanian border. Hannah, Fateh, and Baraq’s stories support notions of a regulated, camp boundary. The “passes” to leave the camp cited by Hannah, Fateh, and Baraq, however, are not mentioned in Alhayek’s published stories, yet the camp’s borders remain rigid.

Mohammed (2015) identifies areas controlled by opposition and governmental groups as bordered territory. Borders of control disrupt the authority of the state by subdividing authority and control. These same borders are present in Karima’s story during her escape. She says:

*At 6:30 in the morning we left the neighbor’s house, the regimes forces were shooting toward our feet and screaming at us to go back. I gestured with my hand that it is impossible to go back. We kept running through the shooting, and sometimes we hid in some buildings, but there were dead bodies in every building. When we passed our neighborhood, we met armed rebels* (Alhayek, 2015: 11).

Borders within the city are visible across the landscape because of road checkpoints and quick transitions between groups in control. In contrast, control outside major cities covers larger expanses of land with less visible boundaries and authority figures.

Many of the traditional and non-traditional borders discussed above are also identified in my interviews and in the published stories. Several differences, however, persist. My collected interviews emphasize Syria's international borders to a greater extent, covering geopolitics, evolving borders, and contrasting borders. And the published stories focus on additional non-traditional borders such as education, rural and urban life, and ability, in addition to experiences of international borders.

These differences are perhaps due to the storyteller. Only two of my interviewees (Mohammed and Amal), for example, are displaced Syrians. The rest—Adiba, Eva, Hannah, Fateh, and Baraq—are humanitarian aid workers, activists, and outsiders. While their perspectives are valued, their perceptions are contextual and not as direct. Mohammed and Amal's stories are most similar to Rim, Mona, Kashima, Sima, Hala, and Maha's stories. These eight stories reflect the lived realities and vivid personal experiences of Syrian border crossings (traditional and non-traditional).

## CHAPTER 6: Mapping Syrian refugee border crossings

This chapter addresses my final research question: **How can critical, feminist cartography contribute a more accurate representation of those experiences in new maps?** To answer this question, I used my analysis of contemporary mapping practices (Chapter 4) and interviews (Chapter 5) to guide the development of a new, alternative mapping technique to more accurately present Syrian border experiences. I applied this technique to my seven interviews and ended with ten individual maps depicting my interviewees' experiences of, or perspectives on, Syrian border crossings. Next, I combined insight from my seven interviewees into one map by aggregating their experiences and symbolization. I discuss my technique for mapping individual and aggregated stories in practice and by example below.

### Mapping individual stories

I began by mapping individual stories in a conventional manner using international boundaries and place names for geographic context and using flow lines to depict movement. I started with Mohammed's story. After listening to his interview and reading the transcripts multiple times, I symbolized his marks on the page through several iterations to more accurately represent his story. With his story at hand, I quickly began to understand the complexity and spatiality of his story, his borders, and his experiences. As his experiences of and perspective on borders came to light, I focused my revisions specifically on the border experience and its representation. Continuing to the other interviews, I gradually refined my symbolization techniques in each map until I found a useful design and layout. Figure 47 is a key or legend that describes each element (discussed in detail below) in the map layouts.

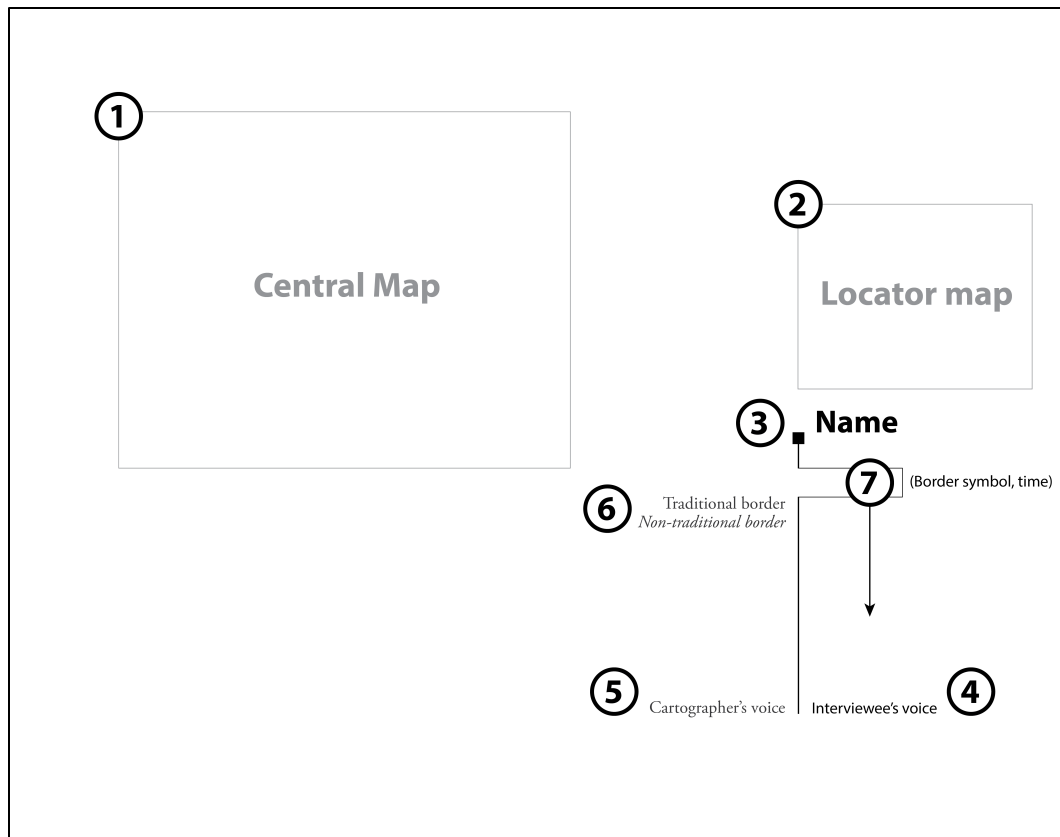


Figure 47: Map key for individual stories

I organized Mohammed's story into two parts: his personal story and a contextual story told through the eyes of an activist. His two stories are interwoven throughout the interview but are separated by tone and the intimacy of experience, so I put them in two different maps. The two maps seem to be detached like two separate story lines but in fact run parallel to each other and at times intersect. The two stories are connected by Mohammed's voice, which guides the viewer through each page.

Similarly to Mohammed, four interviewees (Adiba, Hannah, Eva, and Mohammed) also told both a personal story and a contextual story. The personal stories include the individual's experiences or familial experiences of borders during the Syrian conflict. The contextual stories provide outsider insight on borders faced by Syrians from the lens of a humanitarian worker, researcher, or activist. Amal's story only included his personal account working in and leaving



Syria. Fateh and Baraq's combined story was completely contextual as they traced the journey of many Syrians from an outsider, humanitarian perspective. I mapped each individual story separately and placed it under the interviewee's name. Two stories, for example, exist under Mohammed's name, whereas one story appears under Amal's name.

Many of the borders discussed in each story overlap as individuals encounter the same border in different and sometimes multiple ways. In Mohammed's story, for example, the Syrian border is discussed in relationship to familial connections, sex, and regret. In conventional cartography, these disparate experiences would typically be collapsed into one line. I overcame this aggregating technique by separating each border experience (connections, sex, regret) to its own page, its own space. This emphasis on individual border experiences in the central maps (Figure 47, map element 1) made *all* borders and border experiences visible with limited aggregation. Instead of focusing solely on traditional country boundaries (a very state-centric convention), all border experiences are given equal visibility in the central map on individual pages. These individual pages chronologically show border experiences and expose non-traditional borders such as the body or the city that may otherwise go unseen. The centrality of the featured border and the white space surrounding it brings experience to the forefront. Few features are symbolized beyond the border to highlight and communicate the intimacy and primacy of the experience.

The borders displayed in the central maps on each page are symbolized in specific ways. Borders with geographic information attached such as the Syrian border, the city limits of Damascus, or boundaries of Zaatari refugee camp are projected and displayed as spatially 'accurate.' Other, more abstract spaces with undefined locations such as an unnamed hospital or the body are displayed as hollow squares. Similarly to geographically-defined polygons such as

the Syrian border, each of these rectangular spaces is bound with an abstract border. In other words, if a border did not have a corresponding shapefile (a digital file of coordinates for a specified feature), I defined the space and border abstractly. This technique enabled me to bring both non-traditional space and non-traditional borders to the story.

I symbolized each border in the central map according to the depth of individual experiences and the border's porosity. To symbolize both variables (experience and porosity), I relied on two visual variables: size and arrangement. I created a bivariate border symbolization scheme using these visual variables (Figure 48). I used size or thickness of the lines to demonstrate the depth or extent of an experience. For example, a line that increases in size also increases in the weight of experience. Using the interview recordings, the transcripts, and my notes as a guide, I gauged the interviewee's expression of a border and documented specific words or phrases that defined each experience. I subjectively placed each word or phrase along the x-axis of the bivariate line scheme (Figure 48). For example, Mohammed vividly described his regret for leaving Syria by spelling out the word "mistake" and nearly yelling it into the phone. This border became a thick, two-point, line. In contrast, Mohammed deemphasized his arrest by glancing over the details. This partial experience was symbolized with a thinner line.

I then used arrangement (the combination of dashes and solid lines) to symbolize the porosity of each border. Empty spaces between dashes suggest permeability and movement such that the further the space between each dash, the more porous the border. In contrast, solid lines suggest a barrier with limited mobility. I recorded words or phrases from each interview that described each border's porosity and placed each description along the y-axis of the bivariate line scheme (Figure 48). For example, the words "fluid" and "porous" were used in Adiba's story to describe the Syrian-Turkish border. I symbolized this border as a dashed line to reflect

its fluidity. In contrast, the words “controlled,” “barrier,” or “strict” suggest limited movement and boundedness. Solid, impermeable line symbolization was used to illustrate such descriptions. The bivariate line symbolization scheme allowed me to simultaneously display both experience and porosity. I assigned symbolization to each border experienced or described by the storyteller using this logic.

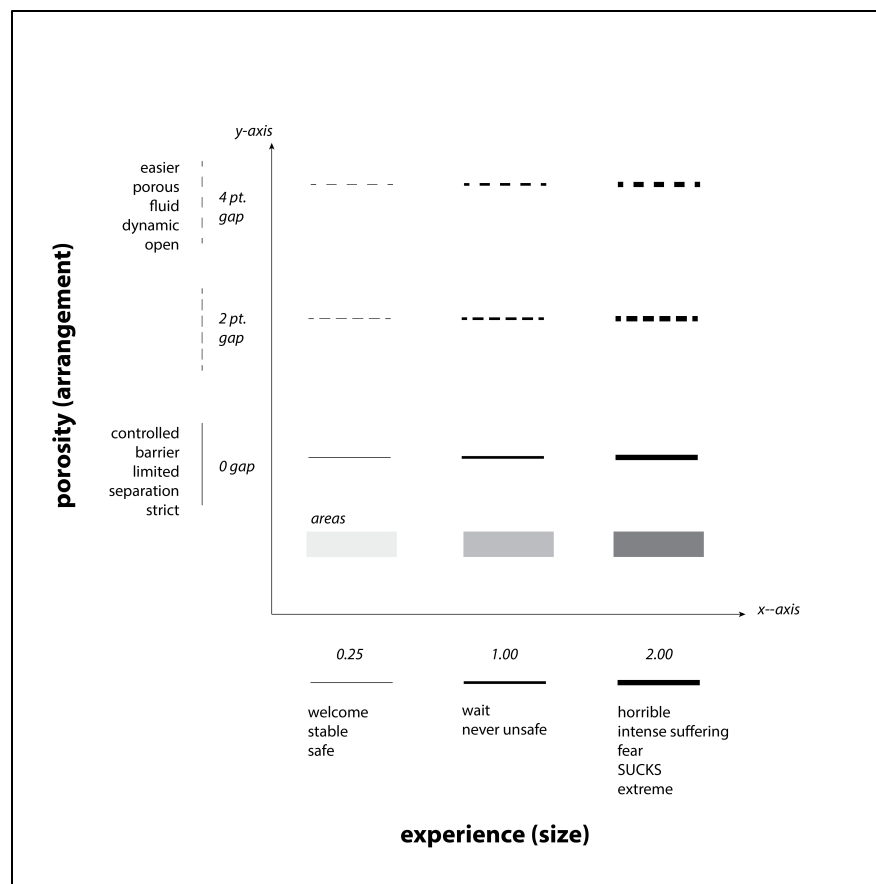


Figure 48: Bivariate line symbolization scheme

Generally speaking, borders are conventionally labeled to provide spatial context for the viewer and to identify particular divisions of space. In the central maps (Figure 47, map element 1), each border is then unconventionally labeled to correspond with the individual’s experience of the border. The label, a simple word or phrase from the interview, connects the viewer to the

experience and to the individual. The label dismantles the aggregation of experiences by removing uniform labels and replacing them with labels customized to the experience of the border. Each label renders the individual visible as his or her voice acknowledges the border experience. This new border labeling technique clarifies the meanings of the new line symbols previously discussed.

Each map has its own locator map (Figure 47, map element 2) in the right panel, which serves two purposes: to orient the viewer by identifying the border's approximate geographic location (if known), and to allow comparison. The locator maps highlight elements within each story by bringing place names or movement to the forefront in black. Supplementary information is then recessed in subdued grays. The locator maps are drawn with conventional cartographic techniques such as uniform lines for country boundaries, points for refugee camps, and flow lines to demonstrate movement or experience. Although minimized and secondary to the central map, the locators and the central map together provide a comparison between convention and what *can* be done to more accurately identify and symbolize borders based on experience.

I relied on type to carry the story beyond the symbols. The name of the interviewee labels a point symbol (Figure 47, map element 3) at the terminus of the line in the lower right corner. By labeling the point symbol with an individual name, I removed the aggregating effect of the point symbol. A thin vertical line separates two voices: the interviewee's voice (Figure 47, map element 4) and my personal voice (Figure 47, map element 5). The interviewee's voice is further identified to the right of this line in a black, sans serif typeface (Myriad Pro). An excerpt from the interviewee's story is placed here, to the right of the line, to guide the viewer through the story. The excerpts on each page build the individual's story and create a narrative. At times the excerpts provide cohesion and at others times, they fragment the story. Either way, the story is

told through the lens of the individual. My voice provides a different, outsider narrative that is designated to the left of the thin vertical line and written in a gray, serif typeface (Garamond). My voice does not carry the story and instead provides ancillary information to support or direct the map viewer. The goal of my commentary is to minimize my voice, focus the viewer, and not speak for the individual.

I also used the lower, right panel as a key for border symbolization. I identified each border by name to the left of the dividing hairline (Figure 47, map element 6) and illustrated the border symbolization to the right of the dividing hairline (Figure 47, map element 7). Traditional borders are labeled in regular styles and non-traditional and abstract borders are italicized. The border is symbolized to the right of the dividing hairline to connect the symbol to the border type. When viewed in sequence, this border appears animated and moves the viewer through each page in the story by gradually descending in the space of the layout.

### Individual map walk-through

Here, I provide a brief walk-through of Amal's individual map (see Appendix D). This walk-through does not cover Amal's map in its entirety, but should be used to help guide you through the remaining mapped stories.

The central map on the opening page of Amal's map series is blank drawing your eye to the right panel. The locator map depicts Syria and highlights Aleppo, the city where Amal was previously living and working as a physician. Below is Amal's name. His name relates the forthcoming sequencing maps to Amal and his story. Here, I briefly introduce Amal on the left side of the dividing hairline and Amal introduces himself to the right describing his life at the beginning of the Syrian conflict.

The next page presents the first border—an abstract square space outlined in the center of the page—discussed by Amal. The border is placed in the middle of the page to draw your attention. Familiarity with the map key or bivariate line symbolization scheme informs you that this abstract border is heavily experienced (symbolized with the thickness of the line) and rigid (symbolized with the solid line as opposed to a dashed line). The whitespace surrounding the border focuses your eye and illuminates the border as well as its label, “people did not trust hospitals.” To fully understand this border, transition to the right panel for context and narration. The locator map shows the location of the border displayed in the central map. This border is located in Homs and is related to a hospital. You are reminded of Amal and his experiences with his name, which labels a point at the terminus of the dividing hairline. Next, you can identify the border as a hospital, written to the left across from the border symbol on the right. Hospital is italicized reminding you that this border is a non-traditional border. Amal’s voice appears last describing this border and his experiences. Here, he describes his call as a physician to help Syrians affected by the ongoing violence and notes the fear of seeking medical attention in a government run hospital. With the information provided in the right panel, the central map can be more easily interpreted and understood in the context of Amal’s story.

As you move to the next page, notice how the border stays the same, yet the border label along with the right panel change. Beginning in the central map, we see a thick solid borderline labeled this time with “she could not stop crying.” While the border symbolization is still the same, the experience written in the label is quite different. The locator map gives this border a relative location, Homs. From the text below, note that the border represents Amal’s home. His home is a non-traditional border (italicized in the right panel) lacking a defined location, hence the abstract square shape. For example, his family—particularly his daughter—is fearful of the

bombing happening outside the walls or borders of their home. The border remains strict and impermeable, but is heavily experienced. Again, Amal's voice carries you through the page.

The fourth page in the map sequence presents a new shape, a border that is no longer an abstract square space. Although irregular, this shape or border may be more familiar to you as it resembles an international boundary. This border is dissimilar to the previous two in other ways as well. The border is still thick and therefore experienced, however, the line is also dashed. The dashed line elicits permeability and movement, unlike the previous two maps. Again, the border's label is unique to the border experience. This time stating, "my wife and daughter flee," which calls to mind some sort of movement. Returning to the right panel, you can further understand the border's geographical context given the locator map. The border is identified in regular style (not italicized) denoting the border as a traditional border representing Syria. Amal's voice continues to describe this border and his wife and daughter's passage through.

Amal's story and experiences of borders continue through the remaining maps in the sequence. After "learning" how to read the maps with the available map keys, the repetition of map layout paces you through Amal's mapped story. Begin by examining the central map: its border symbolization and its label. What kind of feeling do you get when looking at the thickness, arrangement, and label of the line? Next, refer to the right panel for reference and narration beginning with the locator map and then identify the border type (traditional or non-traditional). Last, refer to my added narrative and Amal's voice at the bottom of the panel. With these strategies, you can easily navigate the remaining individual maps available in Appendix D.

### **Mapping aggregated stories**

Aggregation began the moment I started translating my six interviews into map symbols. This cartographic translation from the interviewee's voice to the cartographer's symbol

aggregates the narrative by reducing the first account of the story to marks. In cartographic practice, aggregation cannot be avoided but it can be minimized with conscientious decision-making. Below, I detail my decision-making experience and present the final aggregated map. In this section, I refer to two maps for each border: the small multiples map and the aggregated map.

After applying the technique discussed in section 6.1 to all seven stories, I began to explore aggregation as a means to collate these same stories into one. First, I brainstormed several aggregating techniques, including merging multiple stories into one storyline, aggregating experiences with generalized symbols, collapsing features into new dimensions (areas and lines to points), and quantifying experiences numerically. Next, I focused my attention to the individual story maps in section 6.1 to examine common threads and areas of differentiation. I began seeing overlap between the borders mentioned in each mapped story and started compiling all of the individual maps sharing the same or similar borders. For example, 18 maps depicted the Syrian border in the central map and six maps illustrated the abstract space of the body. It is important to note that the six interviewees could experience or describe this border more than once in different ways. From there, I developed nine border categories—Syria, Syrian-Lebanese, Syrian-Turkish, Syrian-Jordanian, United States, controlled areas, prison, Zaatari refugee camp, and the body—based on these “geographic” relationships between border stories, with the criteria that there had to be more than one map per category. For example, Eva was the *only* interviewee to discuss language (a barrier to mass communication and accurate information flows) as a non-traditional border. As such, I did not map language in the aggregated map.

I then made a small multiples map layout with each category. For example, I copied, reduced the scale of all 18 Syrian border maps, and arranged them onto a single page (Figure



49), maintaining the border symbolization (experience and porosity) chosen in the individual maps. I used generalization in two ways. Because of the reduction in scale, I generalized the line work of each border using simplification. Next, I aggregated the experience label. The original Syrian border maps were labeled with a quote from the interviewee describing the experience of the border. I reduced this label and the experience by shortening the label to one or two words. This small multiples map aggregates individual experiences, however, the voices of the individuals are maintained, albeit to a lesser extent. For example, I included the name of the interviewee with his or her corresponding map to connect the viewer to the individual. This technique allows the viewer to compare varying line symbolization and experiences between

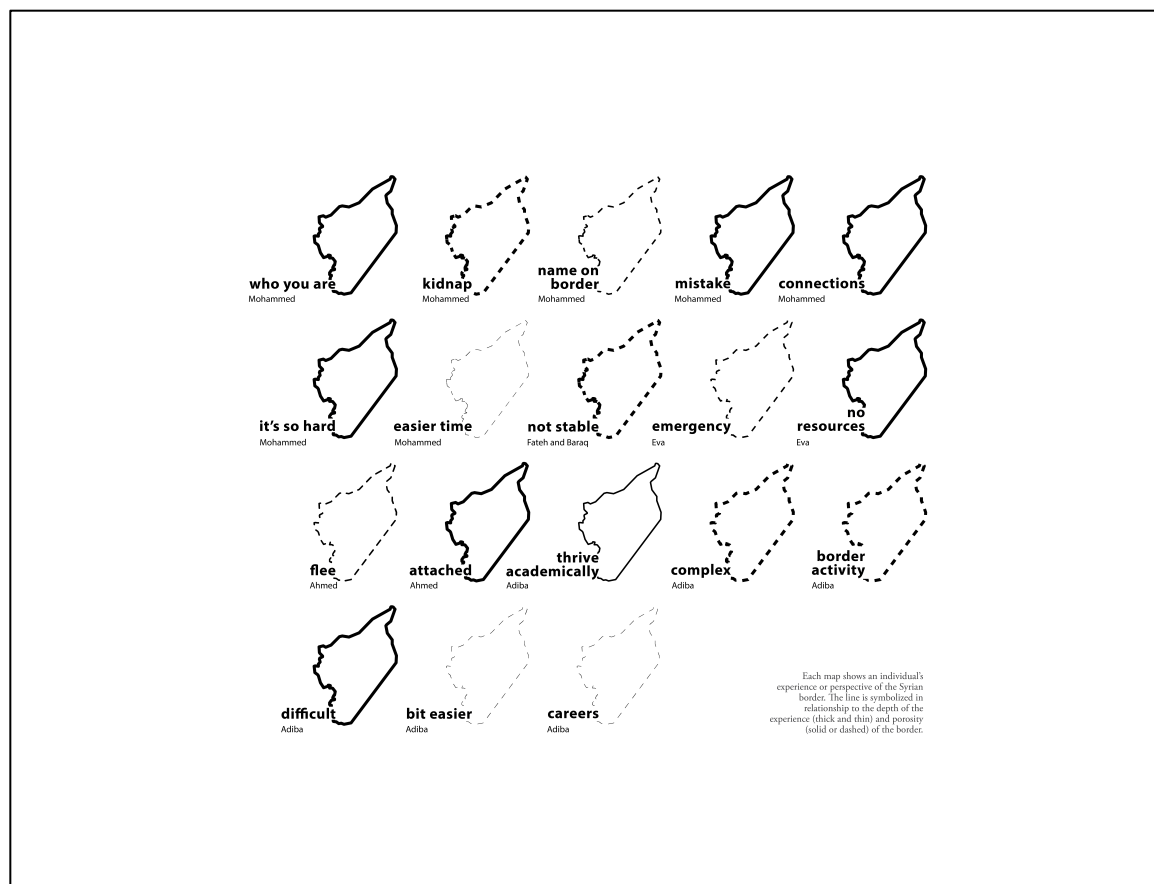


Figure 49: Small multiples map

each person and reduced map. While the line work is sometimes symbolized in a similar way, the experience label on each map is different and provides a glimpse into individual experiences. The small multiples map is a powerful way for the viewer to visualize and understand the similarities and differences between experiences of the same border within an eyespan. Each map is aggregated, yet when displayed together, the maps as a group provide a broader perspective. In the bottom corner, I briefly introduce the border on each small multiples map layout to guide the viewer through the maps as well as teach the viewer about the technique.

Next, I examined the border symbolization used in each small multiples map showing a particular border category, beginning with the Syrian border. As discussed in section 6.1, each border from the individual story maps was symbolized based on experience and porosity using the bivariate line symbolization scheme displayed in Figure 48. Experience was differentiated by size with specific line weights (0.25 pt., 1.00 pt., and 2.00 pt.) and porosity was differentiated by arrangement with specific gap widths (no gap, 2 pt. gap, and 4 pt. gap). Again, there were 18 maps depicting the Syrian border. I used median values of the 18 map line symbols to determine their aggregated line weight and dash size. The median line weight and gap size for the Syrian border was a two-point line with a two-point gap between each dash. This aggregating technique is shown in the central map of Figure 50.

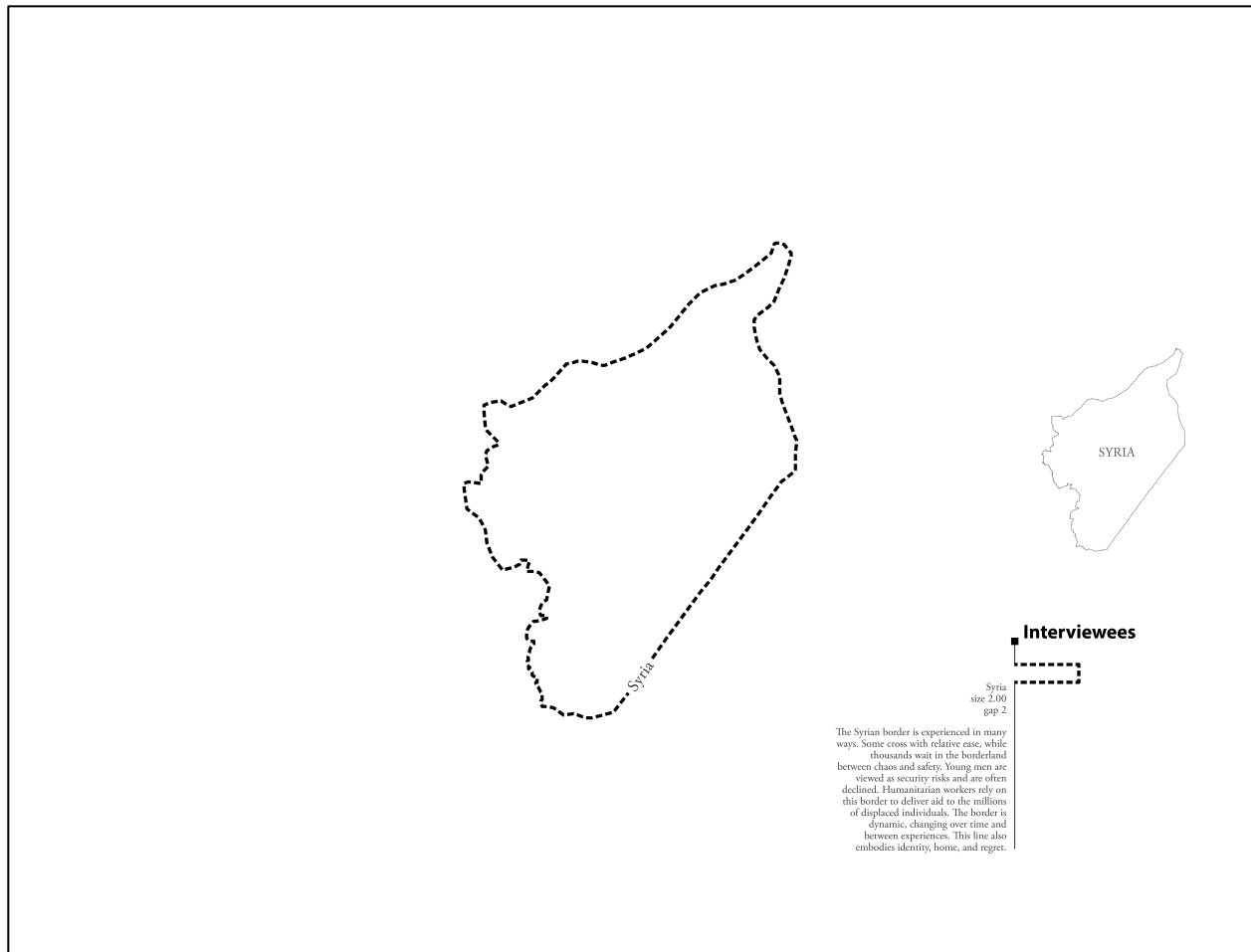


Figure 50: Aggregated map

After symbolization for the central map was aggregated and averaged for each border category, I turned to labeling the line. This step was problematic because the borders in the individual maps are labeled with a direct quote from the interviewee's border experience. Yet, I needed to aggregate individual voices into one, seemingly impossible for a couple reasons. One, I could not prioritize one border experience over another. Second, I could not summarize or 'average' their border experience in words without aggregating even further. I opted to label the line with the border's name (example, Lebanon) using a serif typeface (Garamond) in gray. These type specifications, similar to the individual maps in 6.1, designate the type as my voice,

the cartographer. This technique is a problematic because I completely removed the experience labels. However, by switching the typeface, I recognize my position as the aggregator. Although this labeling technique is a compromise, it forces the cartographer to be accountable. It also expands border identification and labeling to non-traditional borders. Many non-traditional borders are not recognized as borders at all, and without a label, they are silenced. A simple label brings these borders to the forefront and makes them visible on the page.

For the aggregated maps, I used a layout similar to the one used for the individual maps (see Figure 47) with a few minor variations. Again, I used a locator map to ground the viewer and provide a geographic context for the viewer. The locator map uses conventional techniques that allow the viewer to compare the aggregated map and symbolization with more traditional techniques.

Below the locator is a square point symbol representing the individual whose story is being mapped. In the aggregated map, this symbol is labeled “Interviewees” to acknowledge their collected aggregated experiences and perspectives. The point symbol is attached to a dividing line below. In Figure 47 this line separates voice, with my voice to the left (an outsider perspective written in a serif typeface in grey) and the voice of the interviewees to the right (a first hand account of border crossings written in a sanserif typeface in black). Because the stories are aggregated, I did not use the interviewees’ voices to guide the viewer because I could not prioritize one experience over another. Instead, I relied on my voice to summarize their stories and provide an overall idea of how the border can be experienced in various ways.

In addition to the point symbol on this line, I identified each border by name (left side) and by symbol (right side) on the dividing line. Traditional borders such as the Syrian border are differentiated in a regular style, and non-traditional borders such as the body are differentiated in

an *italics style*. The border symbol to the right connects the identified border to the central map. In contrast to the individual maps, I also provided the aggregated line symbolization specifications to directly identify the median values assigned to the border symbols.

This pattern of a small multiples map to show difference and an aggregated map to show one experiential story was then repeated for each border category. The small multiples map is strategically displayed first to give the viewer an overview of *all* of the experiences of one border type. The small multiples map and the written narrative help the viewer interpret the aggregated map, its symbolization, and the varying experiences embedded in each border.

### Aggregated map walk-through

Here, I provide a brief walk-through of the aggregated map series (see Appendix E). This walk-through does not cover the aggregated map in its entirety, but should be used to help guide you through the remaining pages in the series.

Similar to the individual maps, the opening page of the aggregated map series is sparse with the exception of the right panel. Look to the right panel for geographical context provided in the locator map and the introductory text below. The following pages in the map sequence are made up of two map types: the small multiples and aggregated maps. Each border discussed in the interviews is presented in both map types beginning with the Syrian border.

Page two displays eighteen small multiples of the Syrian border. Note that each border is uniquely symbolized based on the individual maps discussed in the previous section. Each border is labeled with a generalized or shortened border label based on the experiences presented in the interviews and individual maps. The name of the individual experiencing each border is listed below. For example, a map taken from Mohammed's map story is displayed in the top-left corner. His experience is symbolized as a thick, solid line and is labeled with "who you are."

Compare Mohammed's map and border experience to the remaining maps. It is very different than Adiba's border experience in the bottom-right corner, titled "careers." Adiba's border experience appears thin and permeable relating directly to jobs and career opportunities. Small multiple allows for easy comparison, so you can see similarities and differences between different encounters with the Syrian border.

On the next page, you see a map layout similar to that of the individual maps. There is a border displayed in the central map. Note that this border is thick and porous, however, this time, it is labeled as Syria in a serif typeface. While this label aggregates the experiences of individuals, it recognizes my voice as a cartographer in a serif typeface. Next, transition to the right panel for more information. Again, a locator map provides general geographic reference. The point symbol below is labeled with Interviewees as opposed to an individual's name. From this, you know that the central map presents aggregated information of border experiences. The border—Syria—is listed to the left of the dividing hairline across from the border symbol to the right. Dissimilar to the individual maps, the line symbolization is identified with size (2.00 point size) and arrangement (gap width, 2.00 point). The symbolization for the central map is derived from the median symbolization from the small multiples map on the previous page. This technique aggregates the individual experiences of individual encounters with the Syrian border, yet does so in a more appropriate and accurate way.

The following page is a small multiples map showing a small multiple of Syria's border with Lebanon. Each border is labeled with a generalized border label and is designated with the individuals' name. Note that each border symbol is dashed, however, the thickness of each line varies. As such, the experience of this border varies in depth. As you move to the aggregated map, the central map displays the median symbolization derived from the small multiples map

and is labeled as Lebanon. Refer to the right panel for locational information, the quantified symbolization specifications, and contextual information provided in my voice at the bottom of the dividing hairline.

After “learning” how to read the maps with the available map keys, the repetition of map layout paces you through Syrian border experiences. The remaining pages in this aggregated map sequence continue to iterate between the small multiples map and an aggregated map depicting the same border. Begin by examining the small multiples map. The small multiples map allows you to compare and contrast border experiences by individuals. This is an intersectional approach to mapping borders, which recognizes the similarities and discontinuities between border experiences and revised map symbolization. Next, examine the aggregated map. Focus initially on the central map: its border symbolization and its label. Refer to the right panel for reference and narration. The aggregated map collates the individual experiences of particular borders into one map, a useful and at times necessary technique. With this strategy, you can easily navigate the remaining pages of the aggregated map sequence available in Appendix E.

## Map analysis

I present an alternative mapping technique in this study to open new possibilities for border symbolization rooted in individual experiences. My goal was to enhance the stories of Syrian refugee border crossings as described by my seven interviewees to better reflect and visualize their experiences cartographically. To do this, I relied on my primary source interviews and relevant literature in the fields of borders studies, critical and feminist perspectives, and mapping stories to guide my iterative mapping process. Here, I discuss the successes and limitations of the maps in light of this background material. I begin with borders.

Borders are central to the discussion of Syrian experiences of the ongoing conflict. From leaving one's city to imprisonment to leaving the country, my seven interviewees identified and highlighted different types of borders encountered. These borders included visible borders such as the one border-crossing point on the Jordanian border described by Fateh and Baraq and less visible borders, such as Amal's body, a border crossed when he was physically hurt for medically assisting both sides of the war. Borders are the main focus of this mapping project and the main focus within each map layout.

Borders and cartography have a rich, interwoven history as described by Jeremy Black (1999). Black (1997) argues that the development and persistence of the state was and is dependent on the precise mapping of geopolitical boundaries. Illustrated in Chapter 4, this state-centric thinking and mapping continues today as Western media continues to be heavily reliant on the symbolization of traditional borders. The cartographic emphasis and reliance on borders follows suit with John Agnew's idea of the *territorial trap* that all state boundaries are fixed, homogenous, and equal containers of the state (1994 and 2003). The interviews presented in Chapter 5, however, prove otherwise. My new maps aim to dispose this state-centrism by removing homogenous symbolization. Borders are not equal, static, or rigid and are not experienced in the same ways. I developed the bivariate line symbolization scheme (Figure 48) to reflect these dissimilarities and discontinuities. In addition, I added border labels that emphasize experience over boundary. By doing so, I "untrap" the map and international borders.

Similar to the work of Guidice and Guibilaro (2015) and Yuval-Davis and Stoetzler (2002), my interviews uncover the hidden narratives and complexities of individual experiences of borders. I expand on this work by translating these experiences into symbols and marks on the map challenging cartographic conventions. Moore and Perdue make a successful attempt at this



in “Contours of Contention” (2014). I use Pearce (2008) as a guide to stay within the confines of the digital map and cartographic language without venturing into complete cartographic abstraction. Furthermore, Guidice and Guibilaro (2015: 81) note that borders are commonly simplified into continuous lines on a map, reducing experiences and reality of borders. However, despite their lack of emotion and accurate experiential representation, lines are convenient dimensional choices to display borders (Guidice and Giubilaro, 2015: 81). I choose lines to depict borders in the central maps because of their familiarity and usefulness to the viewer. I then explored, reimagined, and reshaped the conventional symbolization of the line to reveal the possibilities of mapping the experience and porosity of the border simultaneously. As a result, I developed the bivariate line symbolization scheme in Figure 48 and added experiential border labels to provide a vivid encounter with the individual’s story and border experience.

As Rumford points out, borders are “no longer simply lines on the map, borders have their own space and have become zones of exchange, connectivity, and security” or lack of security for that matter (Rumford, 2006: 161-162). In a similar way, I expanded the dimension of the lines to areas when noted by the interviewee. For example, Fateh and Baraq describe Syria’s border with Jordan as an area with over a 1,000 refugees waiting for clear passage. Camps have arisen in this borderland and many fear for safety in this in-between border space. I re-envisioned the symbolization for these borderlands or areas using representational cartographic language. Like lines, I used the bivariate line symbolization scheme to show the bounds of the border area based on experience and porosity (see areas in Figure 47). I then added hue (black) with changes in value to show depth of experience. The darker the area, the more significant the borderland experience; the lighter the area, the experience had less of an impact.

In addition to traditional borders such as international borders, I also mapped non-

traditional borders defined by Antonsich as boundaries between social spaces (2011). Näre further describes non-traditional borders as contact spaces where people engage and interact in particular ways in particular spaces (2012). Many of these non-traditional borders were identified in the interviews. Hannah, for example, recognized the social barriers between Syrians in Zaatari refugee camp and the police running the camp. Other non-traditional divisions include but are not limited to, the body, language, the camp, controlled areas such as cities, and prisons. I wanted to map all borders, traditional and non-traditional, encountered or discussed by my interviewees. To do this, I needed to find or attempt to find their geographic locations.

One of the most significant differences between traditional and non-traditional borders is their geographic ‘exactness.’ Traditional borders such as the Syrian border have specific geographic coordinates to download freely online from *Natural Earth* or *DivaGIS* and then upload into a Geographic Information System and graphic design software for mapping. With a georeferenced international boundary like Syria or the city limits of Damascus, I could project a particular border to enhance its geographic accuracy. In contrast, non-traditional borders do not always have a precise location and a corresponding digital file. Borders or features that lack geographic information are generally not mapped, rendering them invisible or deleted altogether from the story. For borders with unspecified coordinates, I used square spaces with boundary lines to show undefined, abstract space. This technique revealed non-traditional borders that would otherwise go unseen. By placing the abstract square in the same space as I would a traditional border, I identified, symbolized, and leveled the significance of *all* borders and border experiences.

Critical and feminist theory played a significant role in my cartographic decisions. More specifically, I sought to ingrain the theoretical concepts of the body, vision, reflexivity,

intersectionality, inclusion and transformation into my maps. Could I fully translate each concept into the maps? No. These areas of literature, however, are critical to re-envisioning the map, its symbols, and its overall purpose.

The body is a complex topic because of its many interpretations (Sprunk, 2010). While mapping, I focused on the simplest and most direct definition: the body is “the geography closest in” (Rich, 1986: 212). This definition allowed me to examine the stories told by my seven interviewees, looking for these intimate geographies, including experiences (Amal’s physical injury), perspectives (Adiba’s limited perspective as an outsider), and feelings (Hannah’s feeling of personal safety).

These personal geographies and the individual body are often not mapped. We—cartographers—have a tendency to map bodies only in sum. As discussed by Sprunk (2010: 289) and Chapter 4, medical geography and contemporary media frequently aggregates bodies into points, lines, or areas neglecting the subjective, personal experiences of those involved. Individual experiences are lost, while a generalized reference map remains.

Valentine (1991: 331) calls the body a “tactile space” that is “always sensing and actively engaging with itself (the inside) and the world (the outside).” Using this definition, the body is clearly a space bound by a border. Because of the complexity of the body and differences between bodies, I choose the square as an abstract space (not a point or line) to show this intimate boundary (Figure 51). I then symbolized these squares or non-traditional borders using the bivariate line symbolization scheme in Figure 48. Literature related to the body and subjective experience helped inform the development of this symbolization scheme.

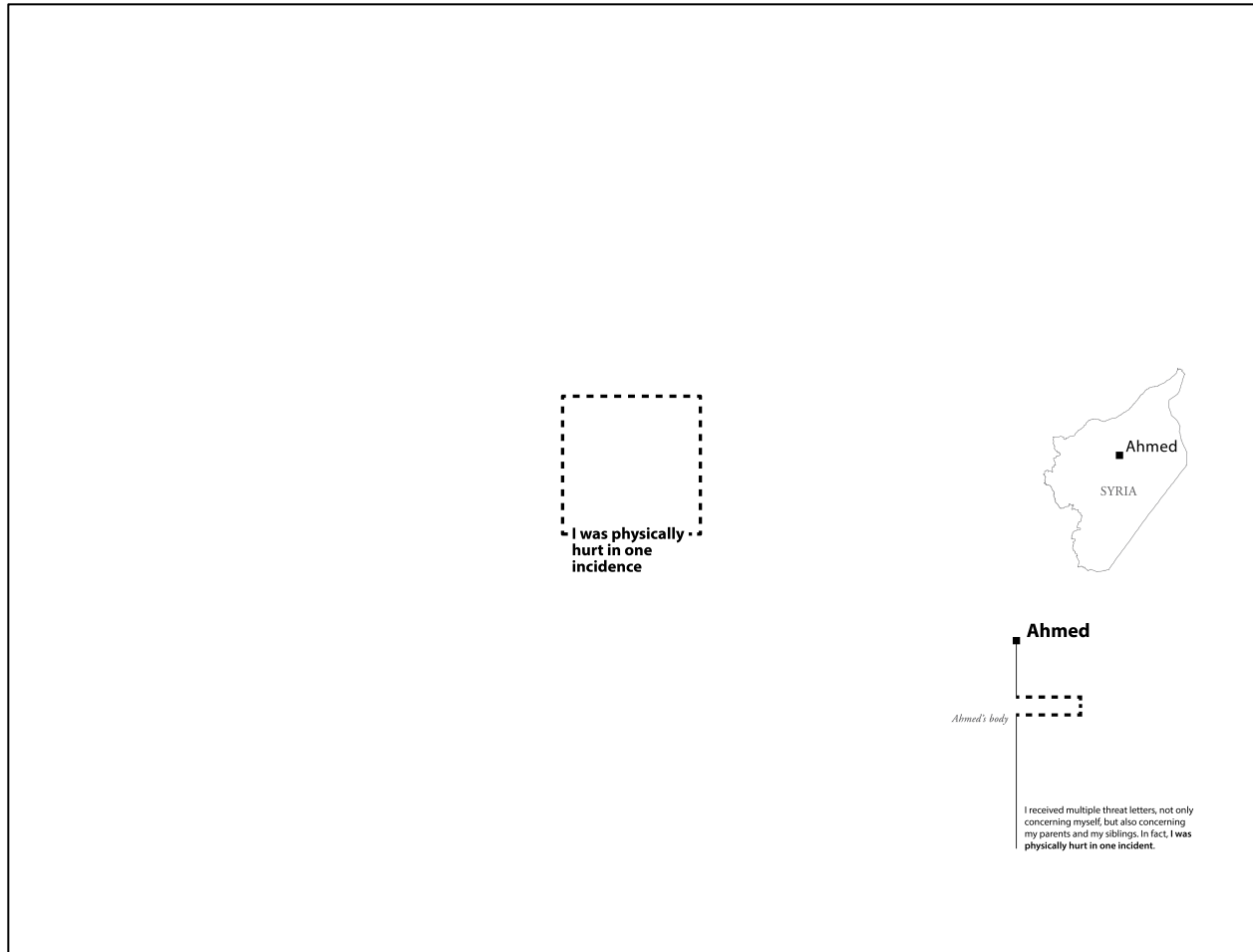


Figure 51: Mapping the body, Amal

I graphically expressed the body in other ways too. As mentioned, each border was labeled based on an excerpt from the individual's interview. Each border embodies the individual and his or her border experience by simply placing the individual's voice on the line. This technique makes the body visible in each map. I also used a point symbol at the beginning of the dividing hairline to represent the individual telling the story. Point, lines, and even, flow lines aren't inherently bad as they have particular cartographic uses. I 'un-aggregated' the point symbol by labeling the point with a name such as Mohammed. The point symbol and its corresponding name are visible on each page. In doing so, the viewer is constantly reminded of the individual or individuals telling the story. This technique connects the central map and the

text to the storyteller. The central map and the voice belong to the experience and perspectives of the individual, the body.

Individuals or bodies are often cartographically aggregated into categories for organization and clarity. However, individual identities are complex, messy, and do not always fit into neat categories such as ‘Syrian’ or ‘woman.’ Instead, I focused on intersectionality or the “complexities, singularities, and interconnections” between individuals (Mohanty, 2013: 549). By making individual maps, I was able to introduce each interviewee along with relevant details about him or her and symbolize borders specific to the individual. Furthermore, through each map sequence, the interviewee also expounds on his or her intersectionality with each border experience label and narrative piece in the right panel. As map viewers, we learn about the complexities of each individual through border symbolization and text. Border labels and written narrative share the voice and story specific to the interviewee.

Although I attempted an intersectional approach to mapping Syrian border experiences, aggregation cannot be completely avoided. For example, I used a standardized layout and symbolization scheme for the individual maps. These techniques are useful for clean and consistent design, but they limit intersectionality and the expression of unique identities. I utilized *connected difference* to balance the complexities of individuals with commonality between individuals (Mohanty, 2013: 549). The theoretical framework of connected difference was useful as I aggregated all seven interviews into one map series. The small multiples map layout shows the same line re-interpreted through individual experiences of a particular border (Figure 49). The individuals are *connected* by having experienced the same or a similar border. However, each border experience is subjective to the individual and is therefore, *different*. Without the small multiples map, intersectionality and connected difference would be limited.

Transformation as a feminist theoretic framework focuses on the deconstruction of social constructions such as gender (Lorber, 2001; Runyan and Peterson, 2014; Everett and Charlton, 2014). Similarly, the maps developed in this study fall into a transformative mapping approach by deconstructing and redefining border symbolization through experience. My maps expand border representation beyond international borders by incorporating non-traditional borders and borders lacking precise locations. In addition, my maps re-envision borders with voice and subjective experience. This technique attempts to follow Soja's description of *thirdspace* by deconstructing and rethinking the power and silencing effects embedded within conventional border representation (Soja, 1999; Cresswell, 2013: 209).

Quantitative mapping and vision—particularly *the view from nowhere* or the *male gaze*—have been problematized by geography and feminist scholars, notably John Perkins (2004: 85-86) and Donna Haraway (1991). Numeric modeling and the elevated, top-down perspective used in conventional mapping distance and objectify the map from a masculine perspective (Deutsche, 1991: 11). Mei Po Kwan quantifies experience and explores three-dimensional techniques to combat the standard use of quantitative techniques and vertical perspective views (2002). While my work incorporates qualitative techniques into quantitative techniques of mapping, I was unable to specifically address vision. I explored oblique and perspective viewpoints in several mapping iterations. Because of my lack of experience working in these perspectives, however, I was unhappy with the results. In the interest of time, I maintained the vertical, top-down perspective. I plan to explore oblique and perspective viewpoints going forward from this project.

Reflexivity in relationship to feminist research calls the researcher to recognize his or her positionality, subjectivities, and biases that could affect outcomes (Mohanty, 2003; England,

1994). The same approach applies directly to mapping and the cartographer. Through each mapping iteration, I needed to remain aware of my position and critique of the map and its symbols. As a cartographer trained in Western traditions, I began mapping with conventional techniques and then worked forward by continuously questioning and editing the map. I struggled with symbol choices, labeling techniques, and narrative text because I wanted to limit my narrative and concentrate solely on mapping the story at hand. In the end, both voices were needed because the viewer wasn't at the interview. I needed to fill in the blanks and guide the viewer. In addition, I had to recognize that by definition, my interpretations were changing the stories. By acknowledging my changing positionality throughout the process to the reader, I was able to see for myself the necessity and value of incorporating both voices. Although it is a careful balance, my voice and my positionality enhanced the stories and experiences displayed in the maps.

My work was also heavily informed by past and present cartographers as well as literature related to mapping stories. The maps critiqued in Chapter 4 were primarily used as general reference maps to supplement news articles. Similarly to cartographers working in the story map tradition, I mapped Syrian refugee border crossings. My maps are centered on the stories and experiences described in my interviews. My goal was to retell each story through graphic symbolization and text. Similarly to critical cartography, my work also questions power dynamics and deconstructs the representation of borders and aggregating techniques (Caquard, 2011). I aim to make invisible borders and experiences visible by emphasizing experience over conventional mapping techniques.

A pilot study conducted in 2014 allowed me to explore techniques used by other cartographers to evaluate their usefulness. I intentionally borrowed, incorporated, and expanded

several techniques from these same cartographers into my maps. For example, Charles Minard brought experience to the forefront by minimizing landscape features in *Napoleon's March to Moscow*. Brilliantly, Minard only mapped physical landscape features that were experienced by individuals in the story. Pearce (2008) uses this same technique in *Framing the Days* to focus on experience and the direct environment, as do Pearce and Hermann (2010). In my maps, the central map is devoid of anything beyond the border and the border experience. By incorporating Minard's technique and surrounding the central map with white space, I can focus the viewer and keep experience at the forefront.

In *Framing the Days*, Pearce (2008) uses route frames to show progression through a journey. Each frame maps one day within the fur trader's journey. While Pearce displays the frames on a single page, I borrowed this technique but instead applied the individual maps of border experiences to separate pages. The progression of the journey transitions with a mouse click instead of viewing each frame at one time. This technique isolates individual experiences and allows for symbol customization within each map. In addition, Pearce guides the viewer through each map pane with direct quotes from the fur trader's journal. I also incorporate the voice of my interviewees into the border label and the right narrative panel. Doing so keeps the interviewee visible and present in the map and allows the interviewee to guide the viewer through the map series. Similar to Pearce and Hermann (2010), I also integrate my voice (the cartographer) to comment on what the mapped voice is saying. This technique helps gear the viewer in the right direction and provides context.

The inevitable question is whether or not I identify my work as a *story map*. Robert MacFarlane (2007) originally used the term to incorporate experience and place, and Kwan (2004) put this term in practice by using color to convey emotion in her time-space cubes.



Similarly, Pearce and Hermann (2010) use a narrative approach to story mapping by including multiple voices in sequential insets. In this way, I do identify my work as a story map. However, my work diverges from proliferation of contemporary, online story maps. The development of online mapping and Web 2.0 has completely changed mapping practices. I believe many of these technologies (for example, ESRI Story Maps and StoryMapJS) remain trapped and limited by conventional techniques. Simply adding video, text, images, and videos into a template does not necessarily create a story map or experience. While online story mapping products brings mapping to the masses (albeit only those with Internet and computer access), the story is limited by the medium. In this respect, I do not identify my maps as story maps as I hope to expand and rethink symbolization choices to more accurately depict border experiences as opposed to solely adding multimedia.

The techniques and choices discussed above were intentional choices. However, similarities can also be drawn between my work and Denis Wood's *Everything Sings* and Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City*. Like Wood, my maps depict the invisible geographies of experience through black-and-white renderings in sequential layouts. My focus is on experiential symbolization and the uncoupling aggregating techniques, however, whereas Wood focuses on geographic locations and patterns. Further, my work incorporates text to provide context and guide the viewer.

As I step away from my maps, I also see the indirect influence of Lynch's style on my own work. Although unintentional, his clean symbolization and quietness with size and scale have made their way into my work. Lynch's work is iconic for its black-and-white palette, small type, and small size. My work gravitates towards these styles techniques but updates them from hand drawn prints to digital, interactive displays. Similarly to Lynch, I also ordinally ranked

experience with weighted symbolization. As experiences become more vivid or in Lynch's terms, *legible*, the mark on the page leaves a bigger imprint on the viewer. For example, borders depicted as line increase in size with depth or threat of the experience. Lynch uses this same technique to examine how individuals interact with their urban environment. By quantifying qualitative interview data, we both are able to more easily aggregate experiences and connected difference.

When I first began grappling with questions of borders, experience, and mapping, I was first inspired by Zarina's work *Cosmopolitan Cartographies* (Figures 15, 22, and 23). Zarina's print artwork wrestles with these same questions and visualizes borders, non-traditional spaces, experience, and movement. She recognizes the intimacy of border experiences by connecting the viewer and his or her interpretation to the map. In her piece "House with Four Walls" (Figure 14), Zarina uses a square space to represent the home and the body. I too use this same shape to represent bodies for its elegant geometry, complexity, and familiarity. Whether I knew it or not, her cartographic voice and influence was there from the start, reassuring me that it was possible to uncover new ways of mapping all borders through an experiential lens.

## CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

### Concluding remarks

The Syrian refugee crisis is arguably the most critical and underfunded humanitarian crisis in recent history. As of August 2015, the conflict continues into its fifth year due to complexities within Syria and throughout the region. As four million have fled abroad, millions of Syrians have become internally displaced amidst major cities in complete ruin. The future ramifications of the crisis and the imprint it will have on the region are vast. While the physical infrastructure, the economy, and political environment are devastated, the impact of this crisis on survivors is immeasurable. Many families have been shattered or dislocated and the roles of men and women have drastically changed. Children—hundreds of thousands, if not more—haven't been to school since the conflict began in 2011 and many are severely undernourished with limited access to healthcare. Others now also live with lifelong disabilities from injuries suffered during the conflict. As the crisis continues to unfold and eventually as Syria rebuilds, the needs in the region will only increase.

Western media has documented Syrian border crossings and stories through riveting journalism, interviews, photography, and maps and plays a significant role in communicating the severity of the crisis to the Western audiences. After viewing an article published in *The Washington Post*, I was quickly dissatisfied with the cartographic coverage. In comparison to the text, graphics, photos, and videos that portray vivid accounts of Syrian experiences, these same experiences are removed from the map. This disconnect between Syrian experiences and the map led to my overall research question: **How can the cartographic portrayal of Syrian peoples' border crossings be improved to better represent their experiences?**

I addressed this question through a specific theoretical lens combining borders studies, feminist theory, and critical cartography. The connections and discontinuities between these frameworks provide a unique perspective for exploring my research question. Through this lens, I first documented, analyzed, and critiqued contemporary mapping practices as produced by Western media. To do this, I selectively collected 86 maps from nine sources and performed a discourse and a content analysis. This process allowed me to understand cartographic techniques that are widely practiced and begin to question the portrayal of borders and cartographic techniques that silence the experiences of individuals involved. I became particularly attuned to generalization techniques, such as aggregation, that render the body invisible.

As documented in Chapter 4, aggregation is used in various ways: collapsing bodies into points, lines, and polygons, categorizing refugees for thematic mapping, and condensing information into charts or summed numbers (example, 80,000 refugees in Zaatari). While necessary at times, these common aggregation techniques silence individuals, bodies, and experiences. My critical feminist analysis of Western media mapping practices sheds light on aggregation, more specifically, the aggregation of experience in border symbolization.

With semi-structured interviews, I collected seven stories from humanitarian workers, activists, and displaced Syrians. My loose questioning focused on Syrian experiences of borders, both traditional and non-traditional, and border crossings in Syria, while escaping, and after leaving the country. Each interviewee provided unique insight into the Syrian crisis and experiences faced by individuals involved. Some interviewees provided personal or familial stories of leaving Syria, while other stories were primarily contextual from an outsider perspective. I analyzed each story identifying traditional and non-traditional borders and compared them to Syrian stories published by Katty Alhayek (2015).

The seven collected stories became the foundation for developing an alternative mapping technique that better reflects border experiences. I used my analysis in Chapter 4 as a mapping guide to help expand border symbolization to include the body or bodies, non-traditional spaces, and experience. I created at least one individual map series for each interviewee and one aggregated map to sum their experiences into one.

I used four main techniques in my alternative mapping solution, including: sequencing, line and border symbolization (Figure 48), experiential labels, and voice. Each map is an animated sequence moving the viewer through the individual's or aggregated story. This technique paces the viewer through the story and emphasizes the individual border displayed on each page. The border, depicted as a line or area, is the focus of each page and map layout. I developed bivariate line symbolization based on individual experience and the border's porosity as described by the interviewee (see Figure 48). For the aggregated map, I used the median symbolization for all interviewees that mentioned a specific border (example, the Syrian border). Next, I labeled each border with a passage taken from our interview to encapsulate the individual's experience or perspective in one eyespan. Last, I focused on voice by separating my voice as the cartographer from the voice of the interviewee. This kept the individuals voice on the page, while minimizing my outsider perspective.

In sum, similar to Novaes (2015), I identified the false visual representation of borders and expanded his thought to the aggregation of bodies in border symbolization. Novaes (2015: 122) calls this misrepresentation of borders and border experiences "one of the main challenges for contemporary border studies." I believe this problem extends beyond border studies to conventional and critical cartography. In this thesis, I present one mapping solution to address

these issues and give Syrians a geographic voice as yet unavailable to them through conventional cartographies. As such, my research question remains open, relevant, and ever curious.

### Significance of study

This project contributes and expands the field of geography by uniquely integrating geography, border studies, critical feminist perspectives, and cartography. Using an interdisciplinary and sub-disciplinary lens, I reveal new perspectives on Syrian refugee border crossings, first by critiquing conventional mapping techniques and then demonstrating an alternative mapping solution that highlights experience. My final mapping technique complements and broadens contemporary journalistic mapping and supplements story and narrative mapping literature and practices.

This project directly contributes to critical cartography. I bridge understandings of critical cartography by developing new conceptualizations and techniques for mapping traditional and non-traditional borders. Is my solution perfect? No, of course not. It does, however, nudge critical cartography and border symbolization forward by questioning our common mapping practices. Second, I connect mapping to critical approaches in geography and feminist perspectives. In addition, my work exemplifies reflexive and multi-method approaches to critical, feminist research and serves as a case study for future use combining discourse analysis, interviews, and mapping.

This project also contributes to political geography and border studies by documenting the transformation of Syrian international borders in real-time, recording the depiction of borders in Western media mapping techniques, analyzing the subjective experiences of border crossings through interviews, and re-mapping traditional borders as performed experiences. In addition, this project expands research related to non-traditional borders such as gender, income,

education, religion, and the body. Experiences of embodied, non-traditional borders were documented throughout my interviews and translated into graphic variables for mapping. Overall, this project extends the study of *all* borders to the map.

One of my collaborators, a local NGO, currently uses personal stories and aggregated data to convey refugee experiences in the region. Mapping is a new avenue for this group and will help visualize and communicate the spatial component of their work, as well as the experiences of Syrians in time and space to a Western audience. In addition, I contribute to their organization and work abroad by developing an ongoing, collaborative relationship with the organization and providing them with the geographic database and my final maps for online publication.

Finally, my hope is that this project engages Western audiences with the conflict in Syria by shedding light on the realities faced by individuals involved in the crisis. International aid groups working with vulnerable populations in Syria and in host countries remain underfunded and lack resources to support the flood of Syrians across borders. While the impact of this project may be minute in terms of international aid, I aim to contribute to public discourse surrounding Syria through the heightened awareness that maps can bring.

## **Future Research**

Going forward from this thesis, there are several research avenues that I would like to explore. Feedback and critique are extremely important steps in the cartographic process and given the time constraints of this project, I was unable to incorporate my interviewees in these last crucial steps. Before I publish additional articles on my research, I would like to show my interviewees the maps and gather their input. Iterative mapping edits guided by their feedback

would provide the most accurate representation of each individual's story or perspective of Syrian border crossings. Without such feedback, this project and the maps are limited.

I conducted seven interviews in this study, which included researchers, humanitarian aid workers, and activists. To expand this project, I would include more interviews for a couple of reasons. My seven interviewees were not a representational sample and many individuals and groups were misrepresented or not represented in my project given my small interview sample. In addition, not to diminish the valuable insight and context provided by my other participants, only two of my interviewees were displaced Syrians. More interviews, specifically with displaced Syrians, would provide first person accounts of border crossing experiences and reveal the intersectional identities and wide-ranging experiences of individuals in the region.

I relied on Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), a research method that will become more and more common given the climate of research funding, in this study. I conducted my interviews via Skype, phone, and email at the discretion of my participants. CMC is an important alternative when time and money are research constraints. In the future, I would like to expand and write about my CMC experience, its advantages and limitations, and compare my CMC experiences to fieldwork on the ground. Extended fieldwork and face-to-face interviews would present their own challenges, however, I think they would illuminate a more intimate and personal side of this work. Time would be an important factor in fieldwork. As an outsider, time and personal interaction might help build trust and potentially elicit more accurate stories and maps. On the other hand, CMC may equally stimulate trust and honesty by enhancing anonymity. As such, these two research methods beg further exploration and comparison.

It quickly became apparent in this study that the new, slightly unconventional maps that I created are not immediately intuitive. The maps require a brief introduction, a map key, and



perhaps a walk-through to familiarize the viewer with the layout and techniques at play. The maps also require the viewer to slow down and take the time to read through the sequencing maps. Ideally, the map symbols and text guide the viewer through each border story. Going forward, a user study may be an important next step to better understand the viewer's perception of and engagement with the maps. My goal was to stay within the realm of the digital map to maintain familiarity with the viewer. However, I am curious if my techniques are too unconventional or require a particular map user.

The alternative mapping technique developed in this study was designed based on the critique of Western media mapping practices as well as the stories collected in my interviews. The techniques and symbolization that I used were developed and customized to my collected stories. It would be interesting to explore that applicability of my technique to other stories of border experiences, for example, the US-Mexican border. I envision a comparative study between three study sites: two contentious and traumatic border areas and one relatively stable border area. Such a study would assess how transferable my technique is across various border situations.

Overall, I am very happy with the final, digital form taken by my maps in this study. The animated sequencing along with the stillness and quietness of each map page are effective ways to focus and draw the viewer through the maps and border experiences. In future work, I am open to exploring interactivity in my maps, however, I am cautious to use multimedia (audio, video, or photos) and interactive effects purely because the tools are available. Interactive mapping can take various forms and it would be my cartographic responsibility to maintain the integrity, anonymity, and sovereignty of my interviewees and their stories. Personal interaction is one form of interactive mapping. For example, it would be really exciting to have interviewees

as well as viewers symbolize the borders as they see fit. This type of interactivity would demonstrate the breadth and commonality between interpretations and translations of border experiences to map symbols. Similar to more traditional interactive sloppy maps, it would also engage and incorporate participants, but in a new way.

Aggregation, specifically the aggregation of experience, became an unexpected focus of my work. My perspective of aggregation changed and expanded throughout this process and I strongly believe it warrants further investigation. This project illuminated several aggregating techniques (labels, homogenous border symbols, bodies as points and lines) that we, as cartographers, conventionally and frequently use. More work in this area will uncover other commonly practiced techniques, support cartographic solutions that minimize the aggregation of experience, and perhaps lead to a revised matrix of aggregating techniques. This avenue of inquiry seems to be a challenging and long lasting research agenda that has the potential to significantly impact the field of critical cartography. I look forward to this challenge as well as the previously mentioned research challenges in my future work!

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## Appendix A: Codes and coding results

### Analytical Codes: Themes from literature and symbolization

#### Story Scale

- Individual
- Aggregated
- None

#### Refugee

- Dimension (point, line, area)
- Symbol (circle, square, tent, triangle, human, dashed arrow, solid arrow, area)
- Color (red, black, green, yellow, purple, blue, grey, white, orange, brown, hollow)

#### IDP

- Dimension (point or area)
- Symbol (circle, tent, triangle, human, area)
- Color (grey, green, black, blue, orange, brown, yellow)

#### Borders

- Dimension (line)
- Symbol (solid or dashed)
- Color (grey, red, black, white, brown, blue, red)

#### Border Crossing

- Dimension (point)
- Symbol (bridge, circle, circle with X, circle with line through)
- Color (white, black, red, grey, hollow)

#### Perspective

- Vertical
- Oblique
- Three-dimensional

### Descriptive Codes: mapping techniques

#### Map Type

- Choropleth
- Proportional symbol
- Flow line
- Time Series
- Thematic reference
- General reference

#### Map

- Abstract
- Representational

#### Charts

- Bar chart
- Sector graph
- Line graph
- Raw totals

#### Map scale

- Small-scale (region)



- Medium-scale (state)
- Large-scale (local)
- Interactivity
  - Static
  - Dynamic
- Unit of analysis
  - State
  - Sub-state
  - Local
- Base Data
  - Roads
  - Hydrology
  - Cities
  - Aerial imagery
  - Hillshade
- Usage
  - Standalone map
  - Supplementary map
- Demographic information

## Appendix B: Interview questions

These questions were continuously adapted throughout my seven interviews.

1. What is the current state of Syria's borders and border crossings?
2. What words would you use to describe Syria's borders?
3. How have the borders changed over time?
4. If the borders have changed, how have Syrians been affected?
5. From your perspective, what is it like to cross Syrian borders as a refugee into Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, or Iraq? What is the process?
6. From your perspective, what is daily life like in Syria? What about after fleeing?
7. From your perspective, what constraints or difficulties do Syrian refugees face before leaving Syria? What about after?
8. What words would you use to describe these constraints or difficulties?
9. Would you compare any of these constraints or difficulties to a border?

**APPROVAL OF PROTOCOL**

February 10, 2015

Meghan Kelly  
m.kelly@ku.edu

Dear Meghan Kelly:

On 2/10/2015, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Mapping Syrian Refugee Border Crossings: A critical, feminist perspective
Investigator:	Meghan Kelly
IRB ID:	STUDY00001975
Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Oral Consent Script _ Meghan Kelly.docx, • Meghan_Kelly_HSCL_New_Submission_Form_V4.pdf, • Meghan Kelly Interview Questions v2.docx,

The IRB approved the study on 2/10/2015.

1. Notify HSCL about any new investigators not named in the original application. Note that new investigators must take the online tutorial at [https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human\\_subjects\\_compliance\\_training](https://rgs.drupal.ku.edu/human_subjects_compliance_training).
2. Any injury to a subject because of the research procedure must be reported immediately.
3. When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

Continuing review is not required for this project, however you are required to report any significant changes to the protocol prior to altering the project.

Please note university data security and handling requirements for your project:  
<https://documents.ku.edu/policies/IT/DataClassificationandHandlingProceduresGuide.htm>

You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab in eCompliance.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Dyson Elms, MPA  
IRB Administrator, KU Lawrence Campus

**Appendix D: Individual maps**

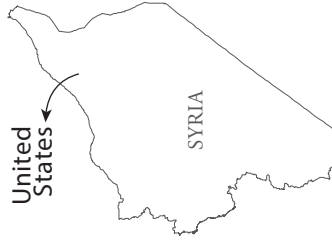
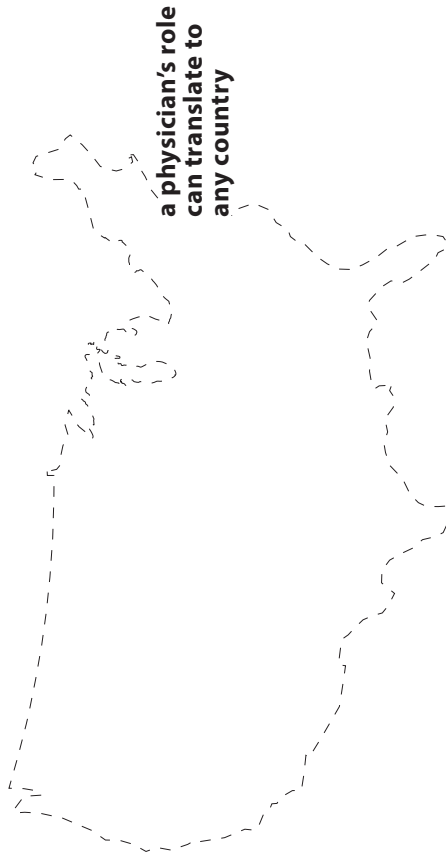
Individual Maps  
**Adiba Personal**



## Adiba

Adiba is Syrian and was born and raised in the United States. Her father moved to the US in the 1980s and her family has been directly touched by the conflict.

My own uncle is now in the US. He actually did medical school in Syria and did all of his residency in the US... And then we went back to Syria and worked as a cardiologist for ten years. Opened his own private practice and then the crisis hit. And he has five kids...



## Adiba

United States

It's not so much even that, you know, he had, he did have some financial stability, but at the same time, it's also affluence in terms of just, kind of academically or I guess occupationally. It's just a physician's role can translate to any country. And so he was able to return to the U.S., it took two years.

Adiba discussed her uncle's experiences with the United States border.



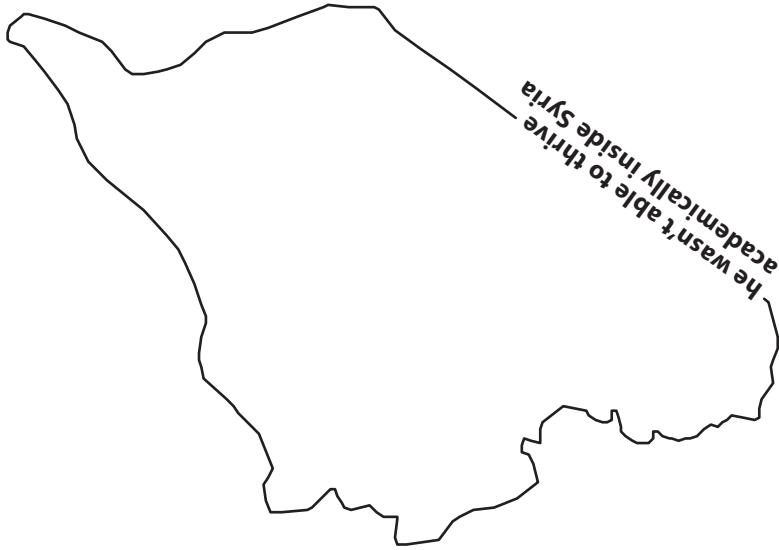
## Adiba



United States

His family is still in Egypt. Eventually, they've applied and they will be following him to the US but for the time being, they are living apart. Again, he hasn't seen his kids who are all under the age of fourteen for two and a half years now.



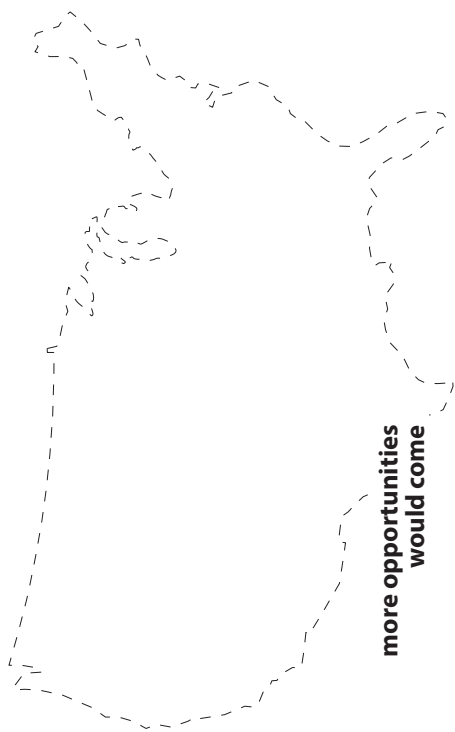


## Adiba

Syria

My own dad. I mean he immigrated to the US in the 80s just for, to complete his master's and PhD because he was, he felt he didn't, **he wasn't able to kind of thrive academically inside Syria.** And so for him, it was a big limiting factor and he knew he had to leave...

Adiba then told me about her father's story.



**Adiba**

United States

My dad, I was lucky enough for him to have the foresight... **more opportunities would come** for him to provide for his family in the US, rather than Syria.

my perspective  
is probably  
limited



Adiba

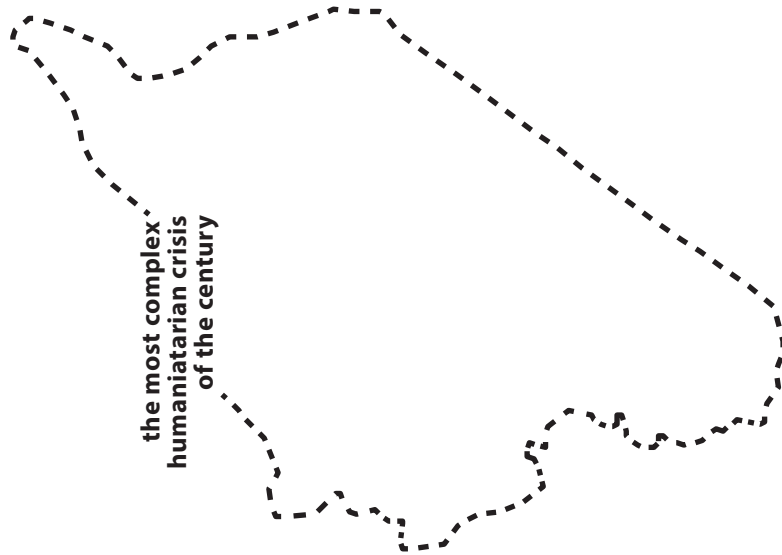
*Adiba's perspective*

I think my perspective is probably  
limited because I would say I've lived a  
very comfortable life

Individual Maps  
**Adiba Contextual**

## Adiba

Adiba is Syrian-American born in the United States and now she works in the humanitarian aid field. Her organization provides aid packages and medical care to Syrians affected by the conflict. Adiba's perspective uncovers various borders – traditional and non – faced by Syrian refugees.

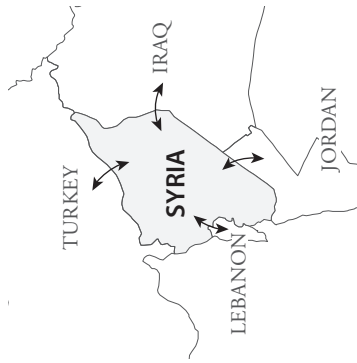
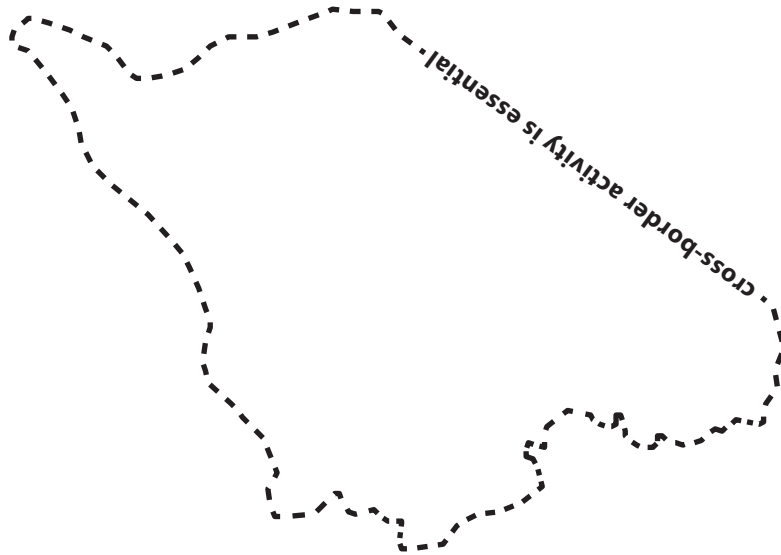


## Adiba

Syria

I would just describe it as the most complex humanitarian crisis of the century, definitely. I mean, just in the past 50 years for sure. Syria is very different because there are a variety of issues relative to other humanitarian crises. There are a lot of political undertones. A lot of different components or factors, I guess, that have contributed to the crisis. Part of the reason why it has been so long lasting is because of its complexity.

Adiba began by describing the overall context of the Syrian conflict and humanitarian aid.

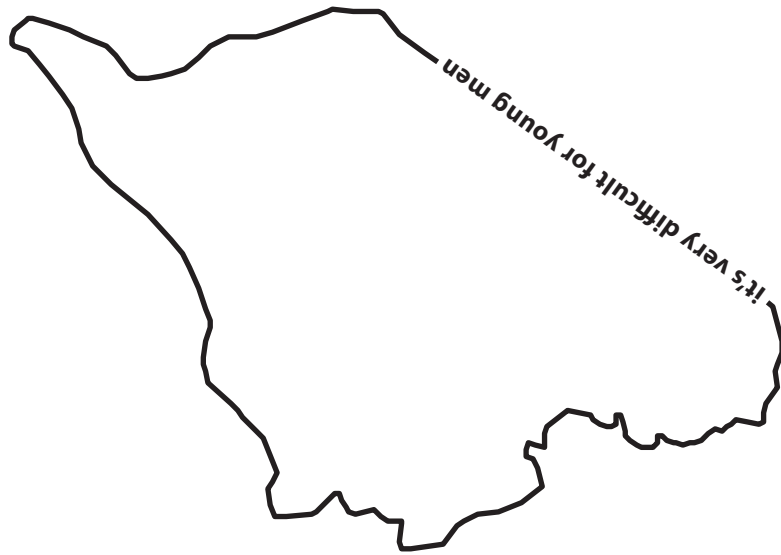


## Adiba



Syria

One of the major factors for our work and even the reason why we've been able to deliver so much aid primarily is because of that fluidity of those borders. **Cross border activity is just essential** to the crisis itself. I know with a lot of UN resolutions, it kind of is one of the main components of it is ensuring that there is a lot of access to the border from, you know, surrounding countries.



## Adiba



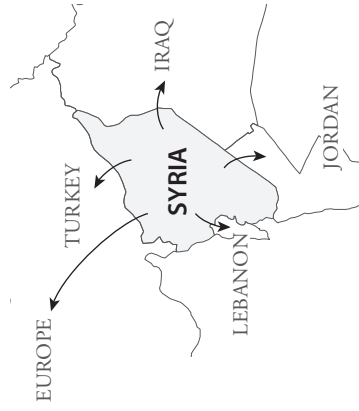
Syria

I know from what we've seen so far, you know, **it's very difficult for young men**, like early twenties, mid-twenties, late-twenties. That's kind of I guess, like a high-risk age to be trying to leave... Either they are called to... serve in the Syrian Army or they are just at that age, they're not coming back..

Adiba described the varied experiences of borders and factors affecting access to borders.



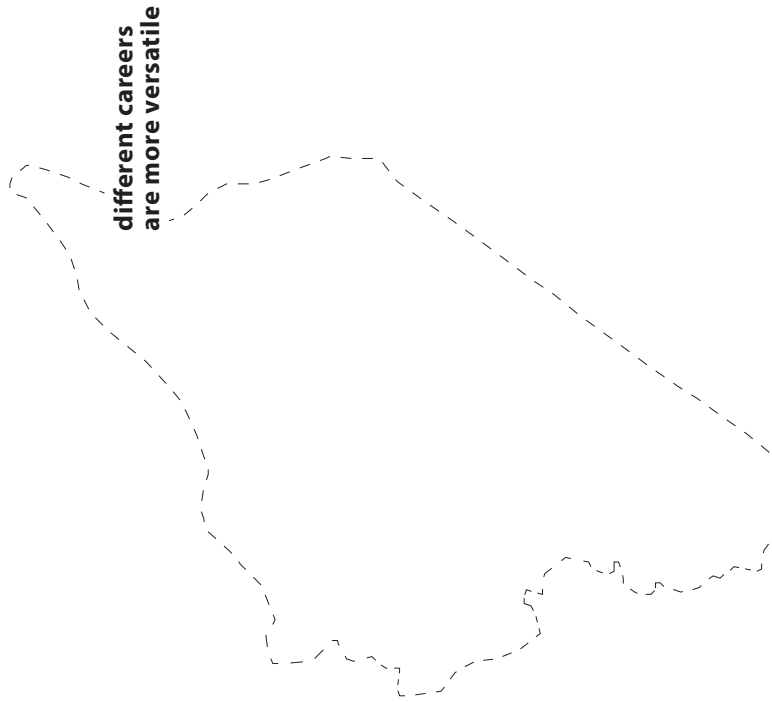
**If you want to come  
to Europe, make  
sure you have one of  
your children**



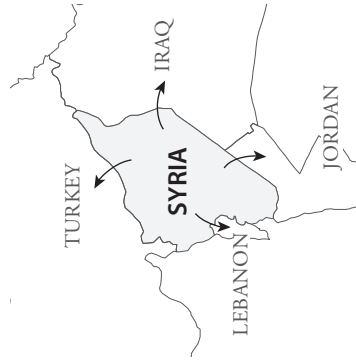
**Adiba**

Syria

For women, I think it's been a bit easier...  
**if you want to come to Europe, make  
sure you have one of your children** at  
least with you because that makes a big  
difference in kind of how the host  
community will treat you. It makes a  
difference between staying in a tent or  
like a caravan versus them actually  
providing you with an apartment...



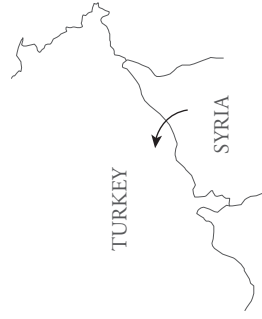
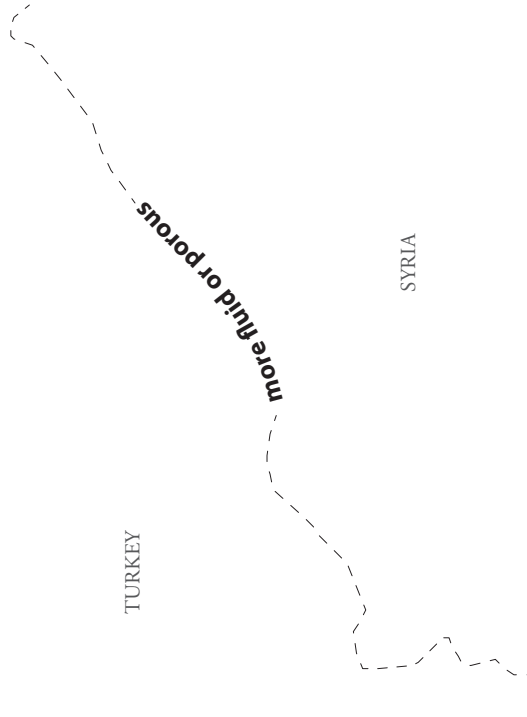
**different careers  
are more versatile**



## Adiba

Syria

You are a lot more bound and limited when you don't have a type of career that could translate well with different areas... There's economic boundaries, limitations... of how, how well you can thrive outside of Syria... A big component of that obviously, is being able to have a career that translates well, whether it's engineering or medicine, or you know, law. **Different careers, I mean, definitely are more versatile.**



**Adiba**

Syrian-Turkish

I would say Turkish, **more fluid or porous**... I think Turkey is just a bit more equipped but I think they'll probably get to a point where they are a bit beyond capacity.

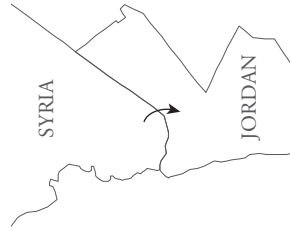
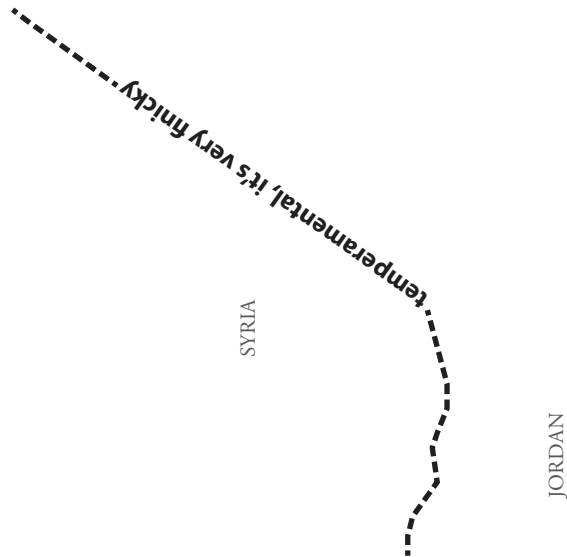
Adiba also discussed the differences between Syria's neighboring borders,



## Adiba



The Lebanese more unpredictable...I know with Lebanon, it's such as, it's just more politically dynamic as well and there's a bit more tension between, you know, Syria and Lebanon generally, And so that, in itself, is more difficult in terms of aid as well and also with people.



## Adiba

Syrian-Jordanian

Jordanian is very temperamental... it's very finicky... it definitely effects the type of aid delivered in and out and also people leaving... Syrians are being [prevented] for the most part right now from Syria into Jordan... it's not to say that Jordan hasn't been a good host community, it's just that they are over capacity. They are bubbling over with refugees of all kinds: Iraqis, Palestinians, Syrians.

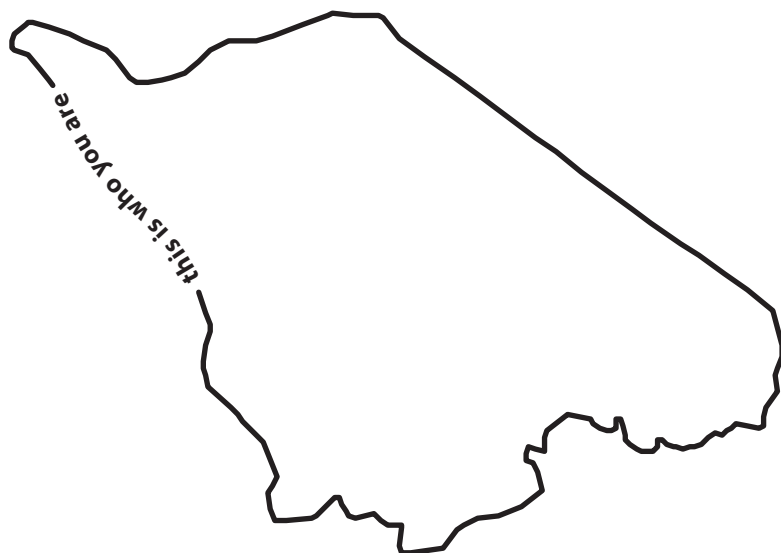
Individual Maps  
**Mohammed Personal**



## Mohammed

I'm originally from the Damascus, Syria area... When the revolution started, I was working with the Syria center for media and development...

Mohammed is a Syrian refugee displaced in the United States.



**Mohammed**



Syria

I got this feeling when it started it just like  
something walked around inside of me  
and was like, yeah, **this is who you are.**  
This is what should happen here too...  
[This is] the best place to be.



I was arrested



Mohammed



I asked Mohammed why he decided to leave. He responded with a series of events, So I was arrested the first time for like some relief work...

they have some connections

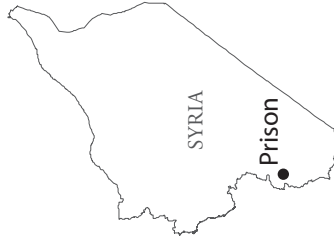


Mohammed



They were forced to released me under pressure from my family because they have... um... some connections

they caught onto  
my relief work



**Mohammed**

*Prison*

Later on... they caught onto my relief  
work so they arrested me again.

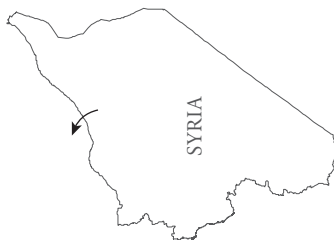
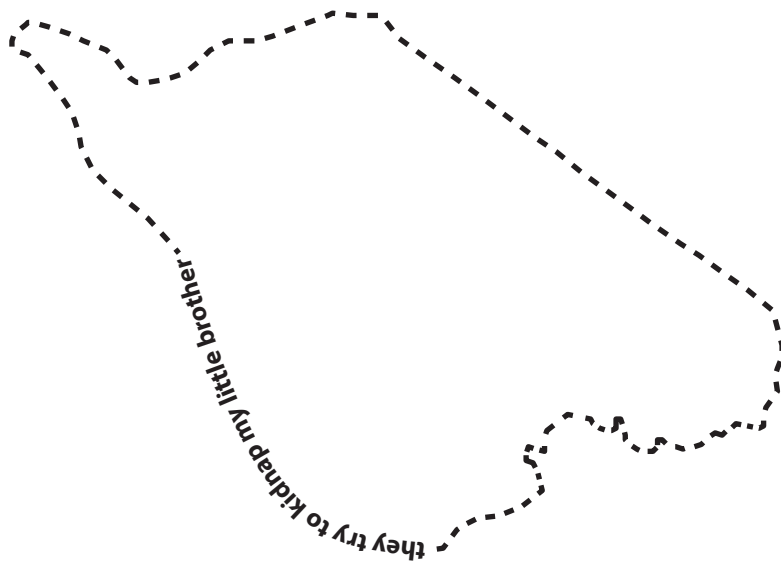
got me special  
presidential  
amnesty



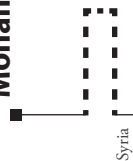
Mohammed

Prison

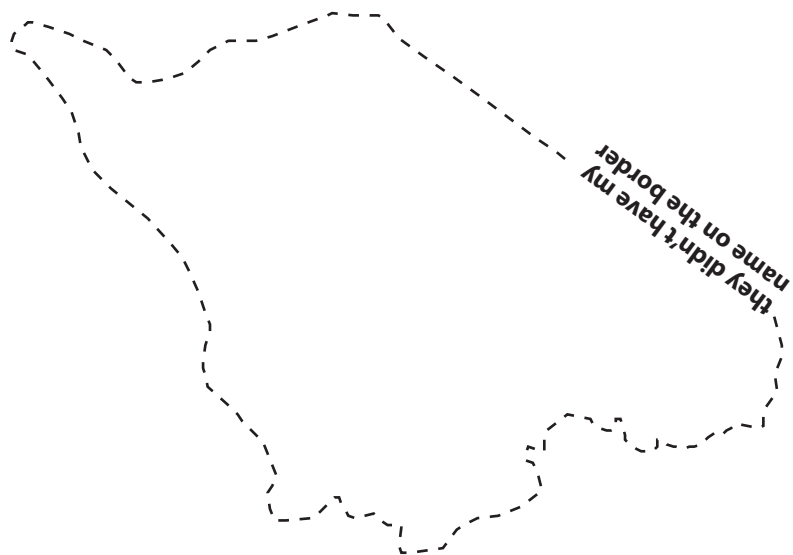
Some family member, he spoke to the president and got me special presidential amnesty and I was released.



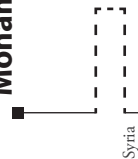
**Mohammed**



I decided to hide but then **they decided**  
to try to kidnap my **little brother** to  
force, like to deliver myself so I decided  
to leave.

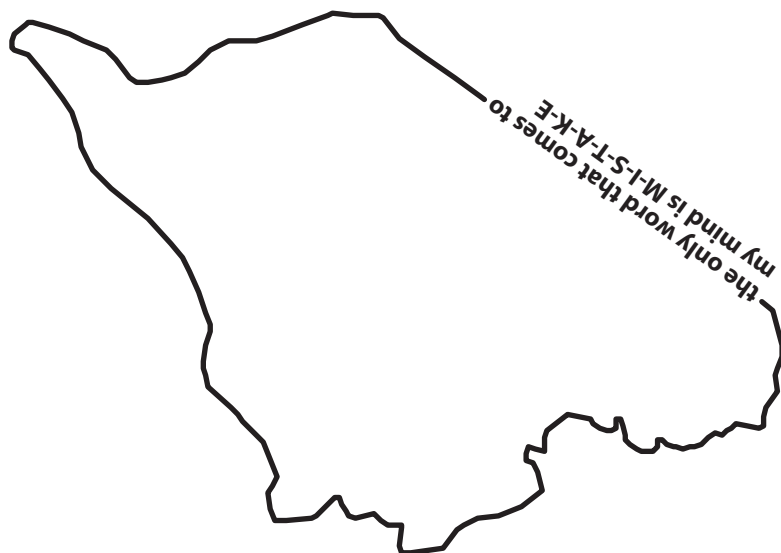


**Mohammed**



Syria

I was lucky. They didn't really have my name on the border and like my family arranged like me, me getting out and just like, everything after.



**Mohammed**

Syria

The only word that comes to mind when I think about leaving Syria is mistake... M-I-S-T-A-K-E... when you leave Syria, you're not fully with the people, living what they live, being under shelling, bombing and under facing what they face in their daily lives...

I asked Mohammed to describe life outside of Syria in one word.

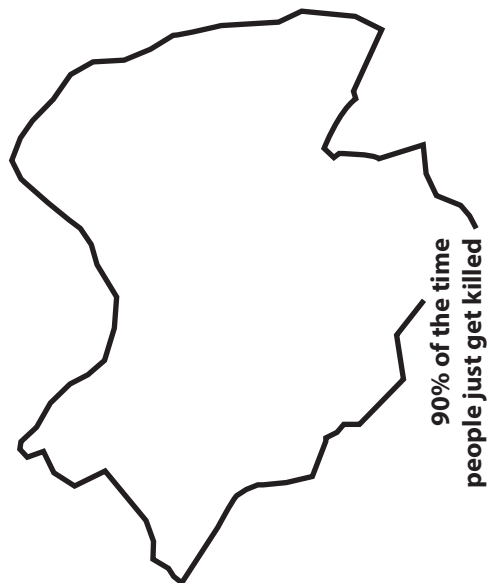
Individual Maps  
**Mohammed Contextual**





## Mohammed

Mohammed is an activist and Syrian refugee displaced in the United States. His personal and professional experiences shed light on borders crossed and experienced by refugees.



**90% of the time  
people just get killed**

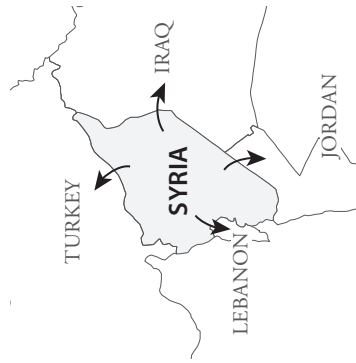


**Mohammed**

*Controlled areas*

Between any opposition controlled area or regime are there are like borders... in Damascus) **90% of the time, people just get killed** by the military when they were like trying to leave through this route.

Mohammed began by talking about obstacles within Syria.

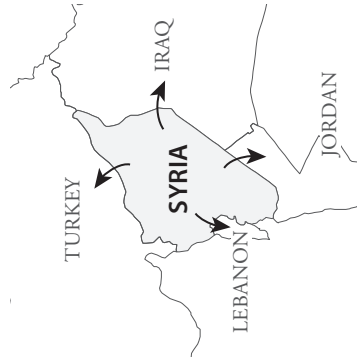
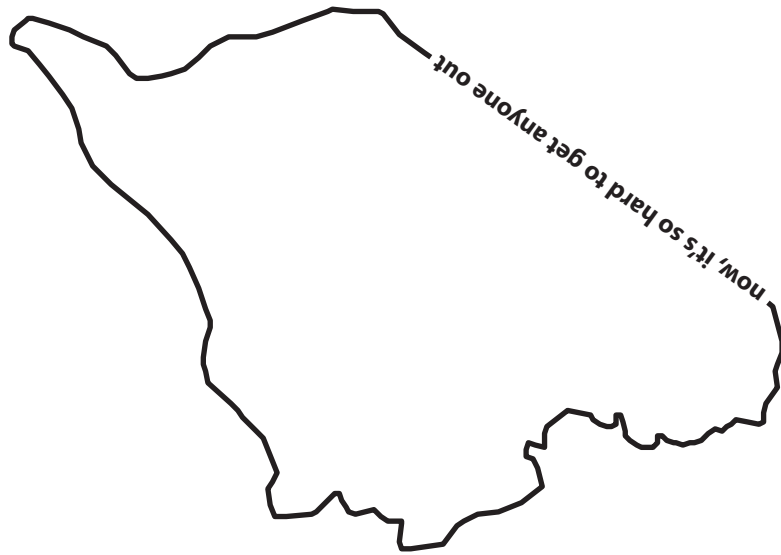


**Mohammed**



I asked Mohammed to describe the Syrian border and factors involved in crossing it.

Even if you have money, **you need connections**. Money without connections cannot really help you...

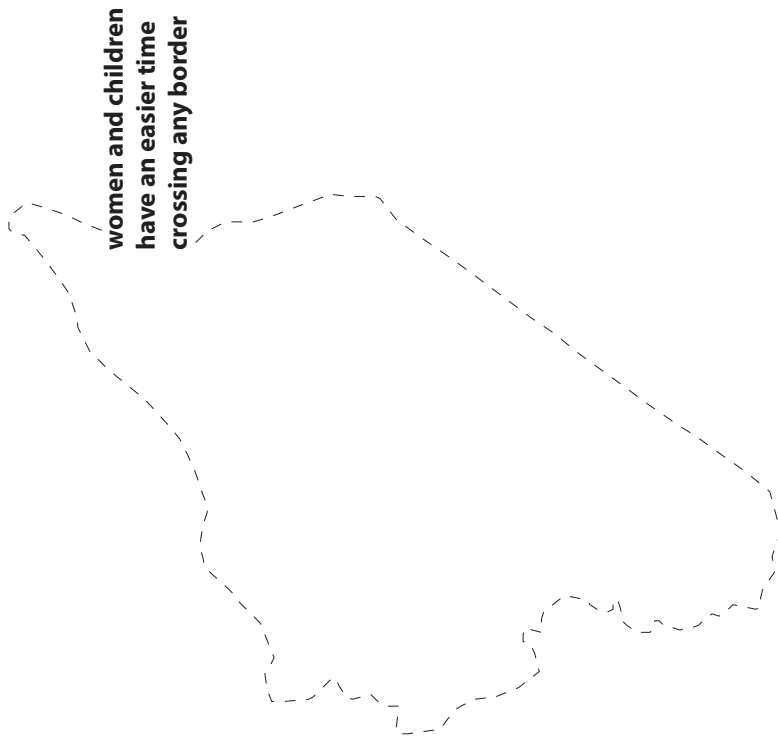


**Mohammed**



Mohammed noted that these factors  
change over time.

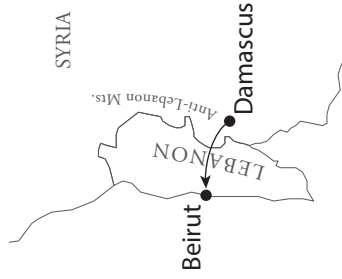
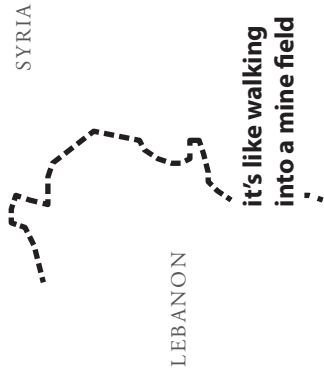
And now even money with connections  
like, it's so hard to get anyone out...



**Mohammed**



Women and children have an easier time crossing any border as opposed to a young adult male... Yeah, that's true.



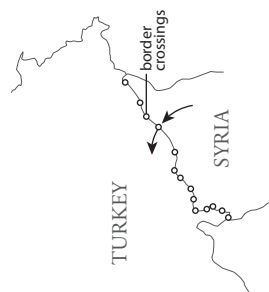
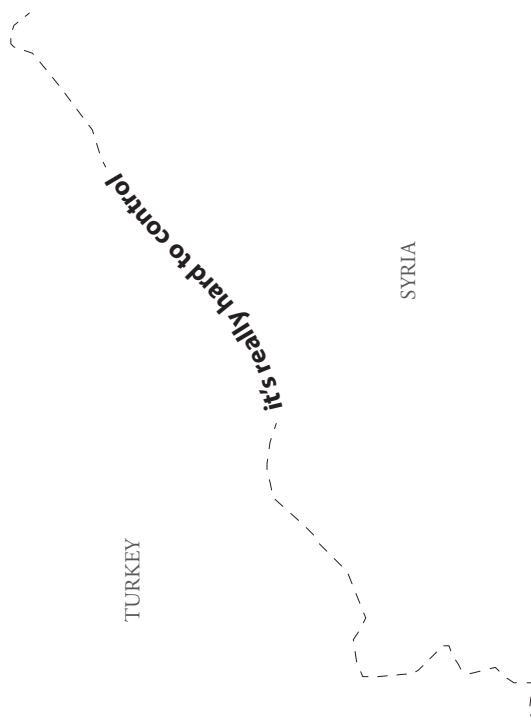
## Mohammed



Syrian-Lebanese

Later on... they put more checkpoints between Damascus and Beirut... you have to go through the mountains and take backroads through villages... **It's like walking into a mine field**

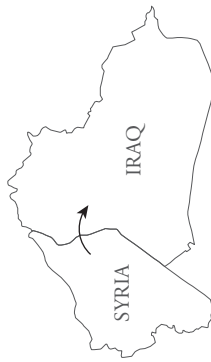
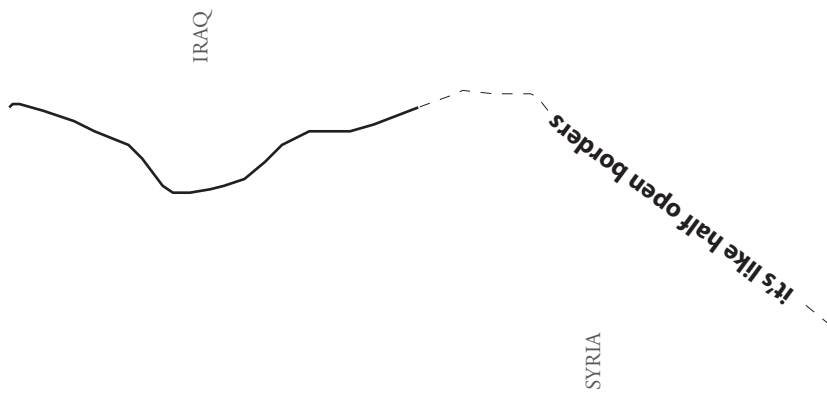
Mohammed described each of Syria's neighboring borders separately.



## Mohammed

Syrian-Turkish

With Turkey, it's so different. Their border's like almost 800-900 kilometers so it's really hard to control... So yeah, it is much easier to like go back... there's like thirteen official crossings

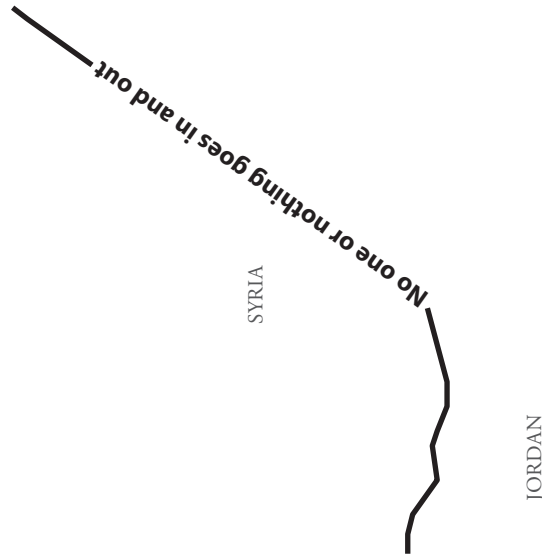


**Mohammed**

Syrian-Iraqi

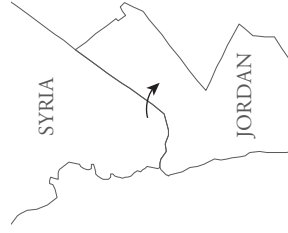
The Iraqi-Syrian border, it's like, it's kind of depends on which half. Half that, I say fairly controlling. **It's like half open borders.**





## Mohammed

Syrian-Jordanian



On the south side, the Jordanian-Syrian borders, it's totally one hundred percent controlled by the, by the Jordan government. **No one or nothing goes in and out** unless the Jordanian intelligence knows about it..

Individual Maps  
**Eva Personal**



## Eva

Eva is an American researcher working in Jordan for a start-up NGO. Eva faces her own borders in her line of work as a humanitarian researcher.

it immediately  
makes people  
distrust you



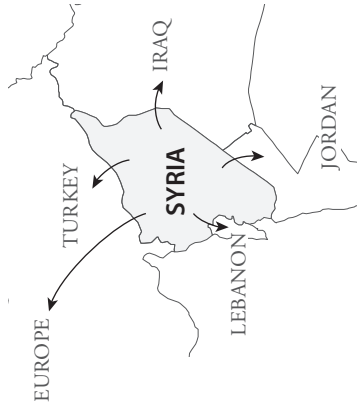
Eva

*Eva's body*

Yes, borders. I'm not sure really because it's incredibly difficult to be a humanitarian research and ask about borders. Because **it immediately make people distrust you...** we're not going to ask you anything about armed conflict... the political situation. We just want to know how many hours in a day do you have electricity...

I asked Eva about her encounters with Syrians as a humanitarian researcher.

information sharing in humanitarian aid is frigid



Eva

Data

The atmosphere of information sharing in humanitarian aid is unexpectedly frigid... so we're trying to get people to share their data but so far, it's a bit of an upward battle... It is like this sort of 'ones-up-manship' that is about battling for, for contracts... from large donors...

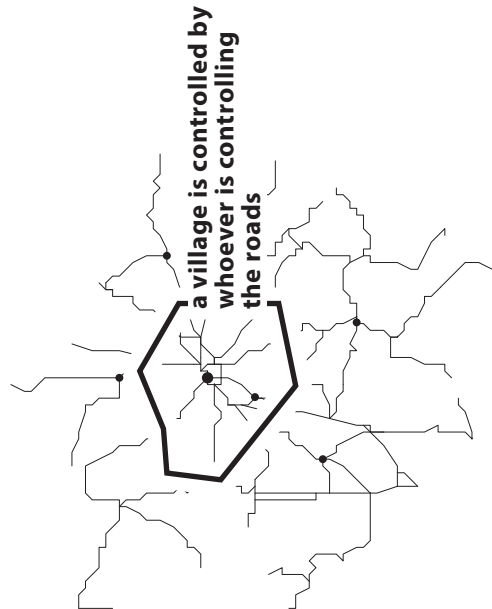
Eva stressed the importance of open data in humanitarian situations and its current limitations in her work.

Individual Maps  
**Eva Contextual**



## Eva

Eva is an American researcher working in Jordan for an NGO. Her work focuses on needs assessments and IDPs in the governorate of Idlib, Syria. Although her work stops at the international border, several other borders are apparent in Eva's story, many of which are inside Syria.



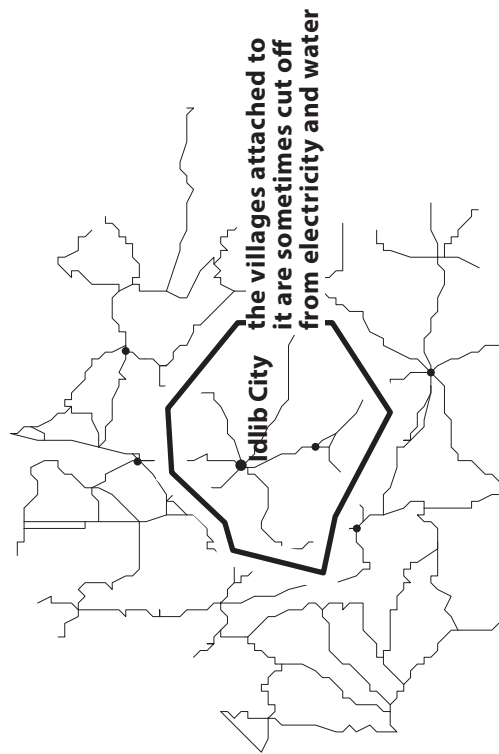
**Eva**

*Controlled roads*

What is needed differs extremely by locale... because the flow of resources is restricted essentially by whoever's in control, political control... So one thing you'll see in... Idlib... is that like, a village that is connected to a city... is controlled by whoever is controlling the roads around that place...

Eva discussed borders in relationship to aid delivery and resources,



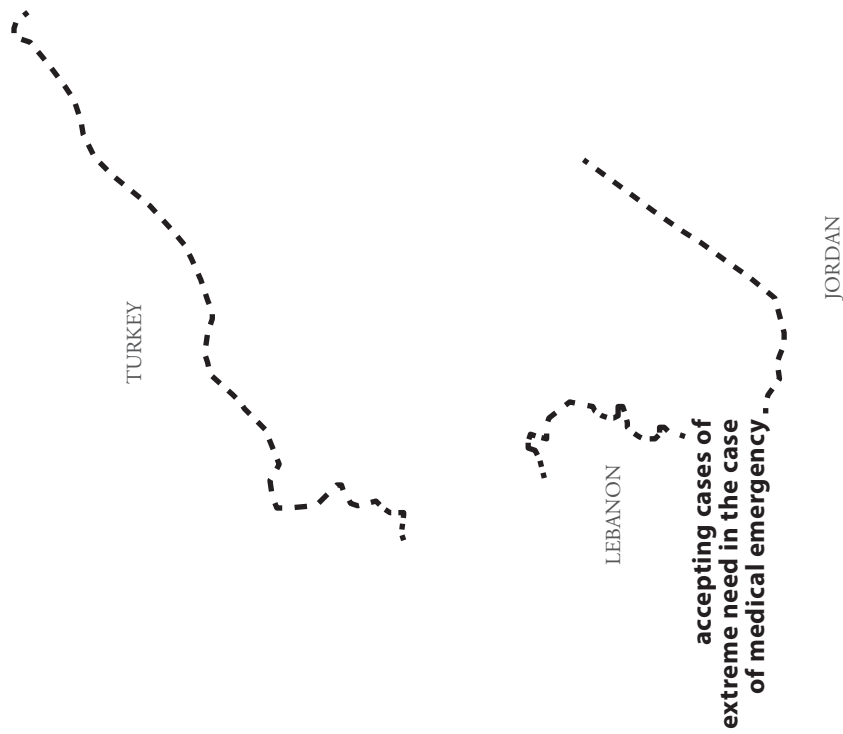


**Eva**



*Controlled roads*

Idlib City, at the moment, is under government of Syria control and so the villages that are attached to it are sometimes cut off from electricity and water...



Eva

Syrian-Turkish, Syrian-Lebanese,  
Syrian-Jordanian

Medical care is also a pressing need in basically every governorate of Syria... governorates that are on borders, so the Turkish border, the Lebanese border, and Jordanian border have extended possibilities for medical care because almost all of those borders are **accepting cases of extreme need in the case of medical emergency**.. Even Lebanon, which sort of hates accepting anything coming over the border at the moment...

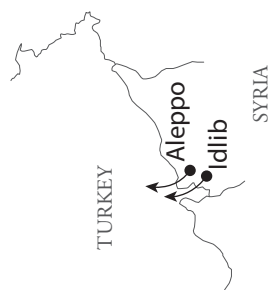
I asked Eva about Syria's international borders and factors affecting Syrian movement.



Eva

Syria

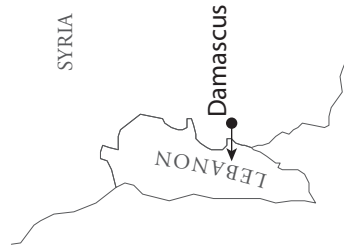
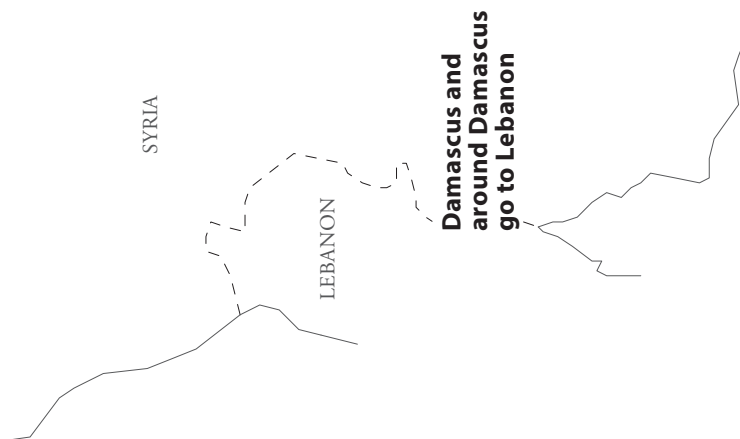
Most people who have gone to other countries have gone. And the people who are left are people who don't have the resources. So they're just kind of moving around trying not to be bombed... So it's either kind of people who are committed to witnessing the events for the world... or people who literally can't go anywhere...



**Eva**

Syrian-Turkish

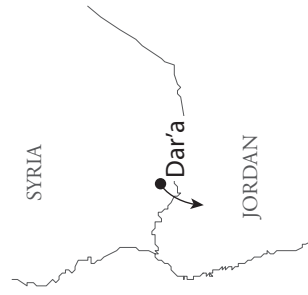
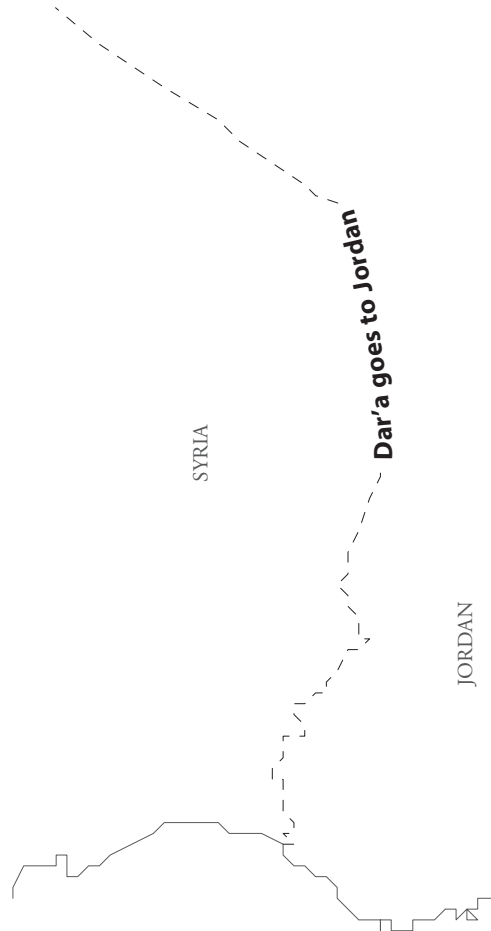
If they do leave, they end up in Turkey first because it's right on the border... This is like very general and not at all a rule, but this is kind of like generally the flows are Aleppo and Idlib go to Turkey



**Eva**

Syrian-Lebanese

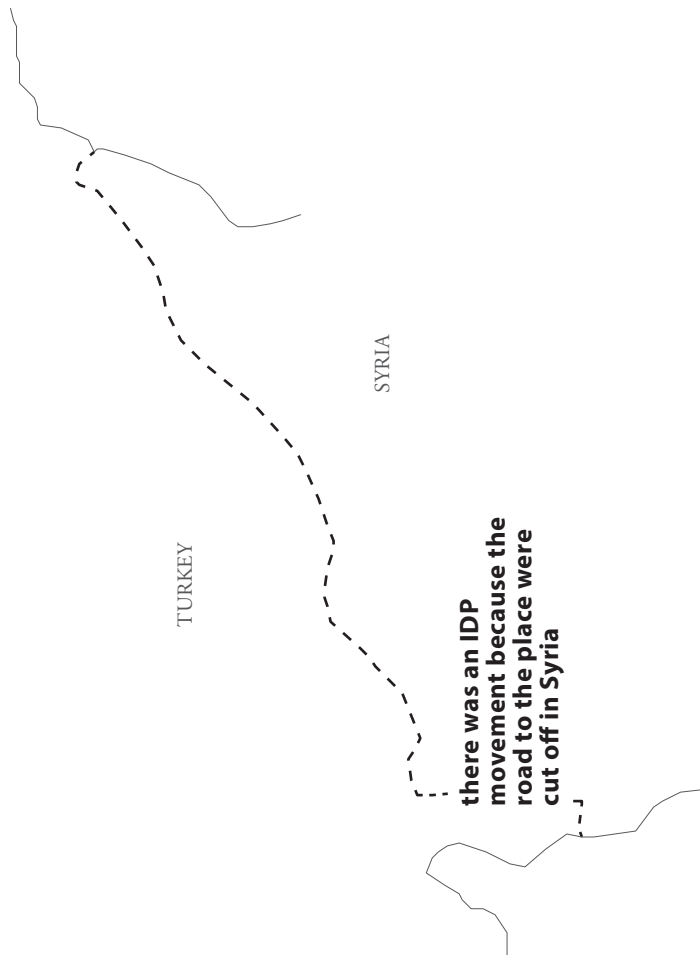
Damascus and around Damascus go to Lebanon...



**Eva**



Daraa goes to Jordan...



**Eva**

Syria

There was an IDP movement that was crossing outside into Turkey and then back into Syria because the roads to like the place they wanted to go were cut off in Syria... people were pretty evasive... They were like 'no, we just do it.'

Eva provided an example of Syrian IDP border crossings.

local knowledge  
is so valuable



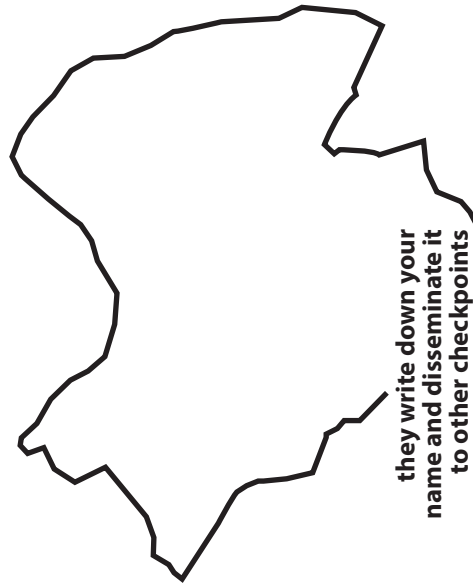
Eva

*Local knowledge*

Often times, the optimal road is not an option so there's all these wierd ways of getting places. **local knowledge in this kind of conflict is so valuable** and also, everybody's afraid of it... Local knowledge in aid provision may be like one of these non-traditional borders... you get these foreign run initiatives... that... just dump aid wherever they end up...

Eva explained several non-traditional borders, including: local knowledge, cities, language, and the Internet.





Eva

City

If you're trying to leave a city that's government of Syria controlled or even go on a road that's even government of Syria controlled, **they write down your name... and disseminate it to other checkpoints...** Basically, you have to come back to the city. Otherwise, you are said to be joining the opposition... It's just like a means to keeping tabs on people.

just getting the town wrong



Eva

Language

There's just a lot of languages flying around... Information that flows the most widely is often in English whether or not it's correct... There's a lot of re-quoting of not entirely factual information... Three hospitals were bombed in X town and **just getting the town wrong**.. this is something we've seen alot which is quite scary actually

mobile networks  
are a problem

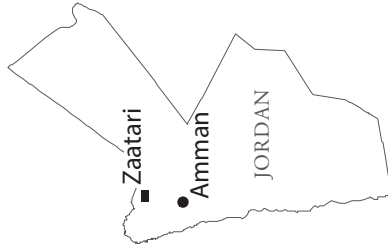


Eva

Internet access

We give people an option of a bazillion different ways they can contact us and they choose whichever one is easier. **Mobile networks are a problem in most places in Syria.** So people mostly contact anyone via Internet, whether it be email, Facebook, Skype...

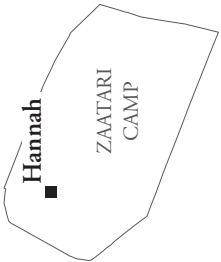
Individual Maps  
**Hannah Personal**



## Hannah

Hannah lives in Amman, Jordan and works in Zaatari refugee camp for an international NGO. As a foreign humanitarian aid worker, Hannah faces her own personal borders and boundaries.

I've never really  
felt unsafe



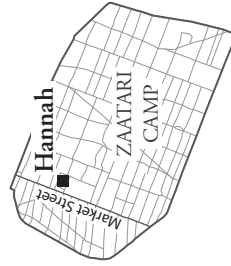
Hannah

Hannah's body

I asked Hannah about her personal  
feelings of safety in the camp.

I've never really felt unsafe. I would say  
at first, I was more uncomfortable just in  
the amount of attention you get...

.. Actually, one time I did feel unsafe



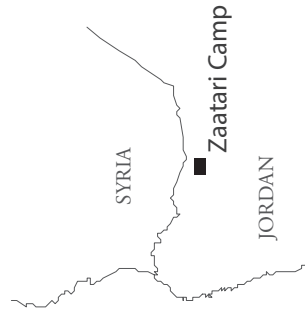
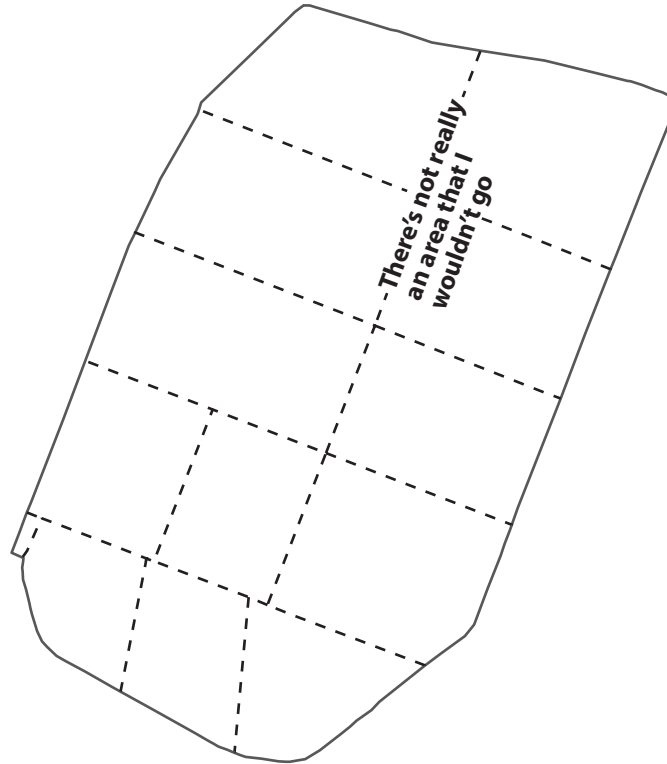
Hannah



Hannah's body

Actually, one time I did feel unsafe. We were walking down Market Street. It was, there was probably a group of five girls.. young boys, were like surrounding us and trying to touch us. Not in any sexual way just like wanted. I don't know... see what they can get away with.

A moment later, Hannah recalled a specific event.



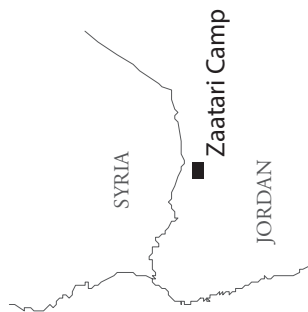
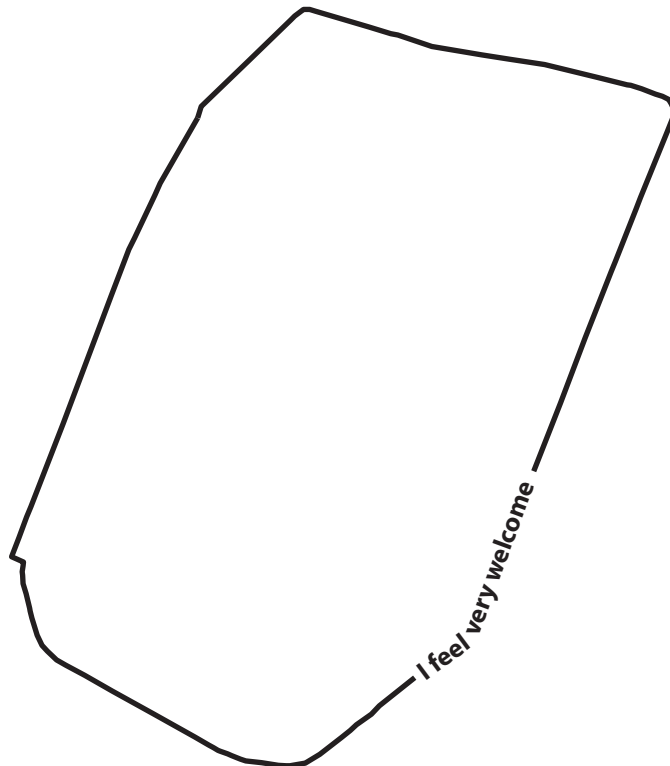
## Hannah

*Areas in Zaatari refugee camp*

There's not really an area that I wouldn't go generally in the camp... If we're advised to avoid certain areas because there's like groups gathering, then yeah, of course, I won't go there.. But in general, if the situation is calm, there's not really an area of the camp that I wouldn't go.

Hannah expanded on her feelings of safety and comfort within the camp.

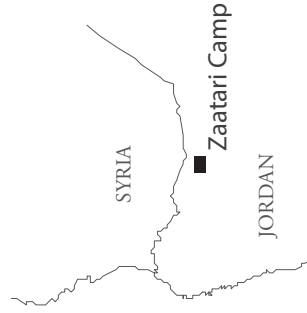
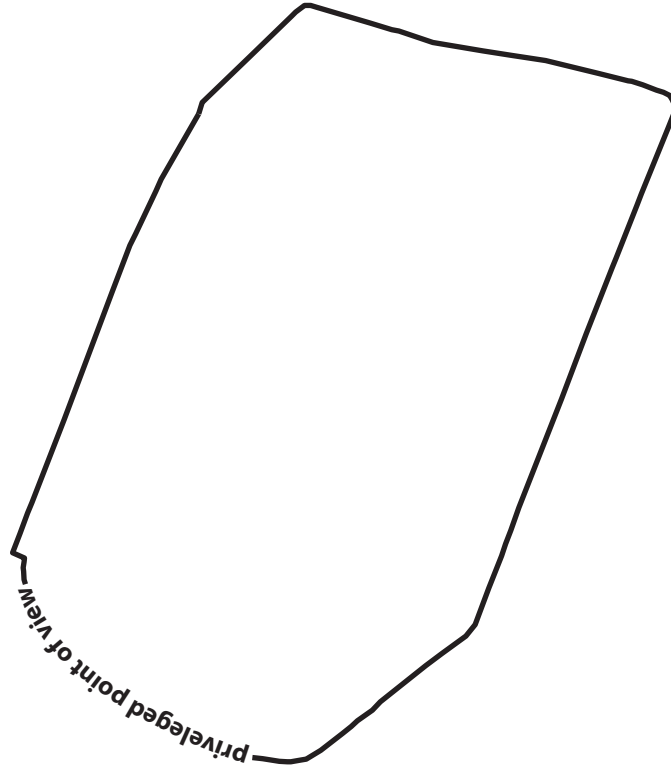




Hannah

*Zaatari refugee camp*

Most people are friendly and very welcoming, you know, they'll ask you in their homes for tea or coffee... **I feel very welcome** actually walking around rather than uncomfortable or unsafe.



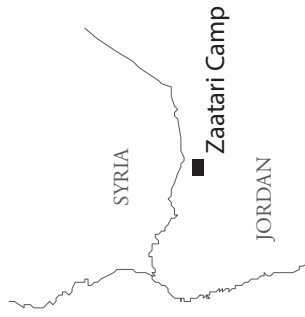
## Hannah

*Zaatari refugee camp*

I mean, that's coming from a foreigner's perspective... I think it's generally a safe place to be in but then again, I'm only there during the day and you know, I'm never there when it's dark and I'm always accompanied by a, usually, a male Jordanian staff person. So I guess that's coming from, you know, from a sort of **privileged point of view** in terms of my safety...

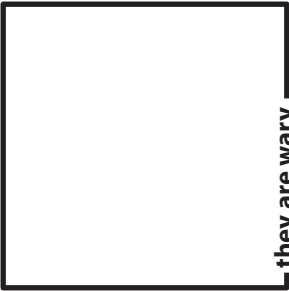
After she discussed her personal safety, Hannah acknowledged her separation as an outsider.

Individual Maps  
**Hannah Contextual**

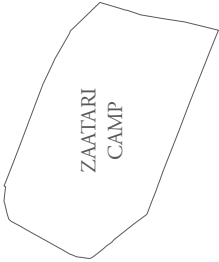


## Hannah

Hannah works in Zaatari refugee camp as a GIS officer for an international NGO. Her work focuses on needs-based assessments and mapping the camp's infrastructure. Hannah's work illuminates several borders faced by Syrian refugees fleeing to Jordan.



**they are wary  
of anything  
having to do  
with the police**



**Hannah**

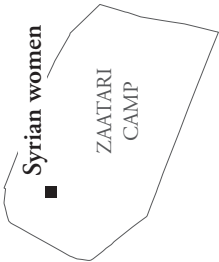


*Police*

At the time of the interview, Hannah's organization was mapping perceived safety within Zaatari refugee camp. They had difficulty recruiting participants because the project is funded by the community police.

**They are wary of anything having to do with the police...** People in general just worry like 'oh maybe the police, if I say something wrong, they police will take away my caravan or my shelter or something.' And also, I mean they're coming from a civil war where their government is bombing them...

they feel more unsafe  
at that time

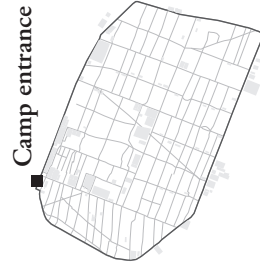
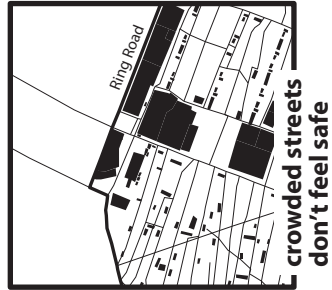


Hannah

Darkness

We had a group of women and the big thing was at night time... either they definitely will not walk alone when it's dark and some, just not at all even if they were accompanied by a brother or other relative... It's also a cultural thing for women to not really be out after a certain time... **they feel more unsafe during that time.**

Hannah's first focus group consisted of adult, Syrian women in the camp.

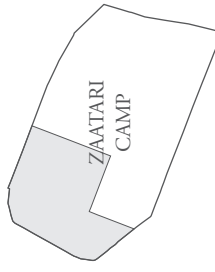
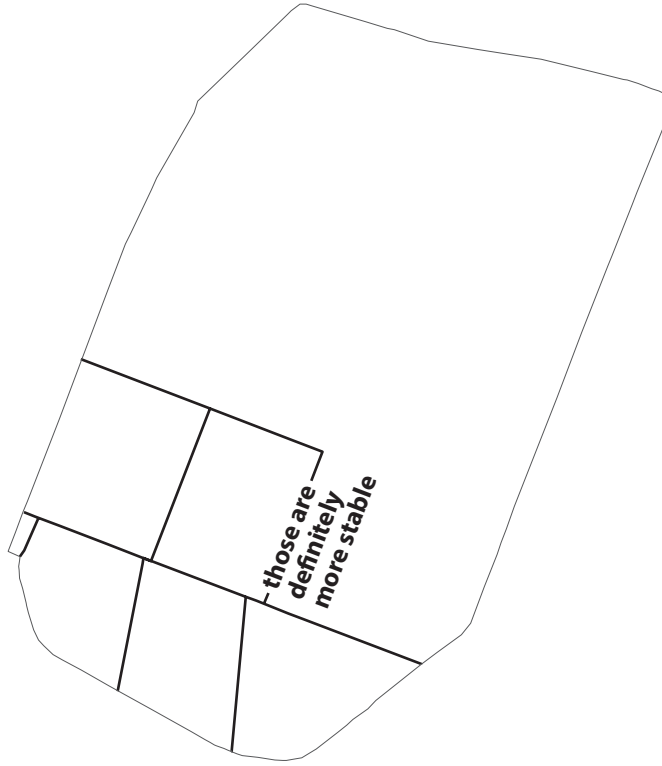


## Hannah

*Zaatari camp entrance*

But as far as [safe] areas, some streets that are really **crowded that don't feel safe**. I think someone mentioned that they feel like someone might steal, try to steal something from them... the main entrance of the camp because again, there are a lot of cars and there's not a separate area for pedestrians...

The women highlighted particular areas where they feel unsafe.



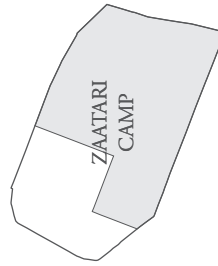
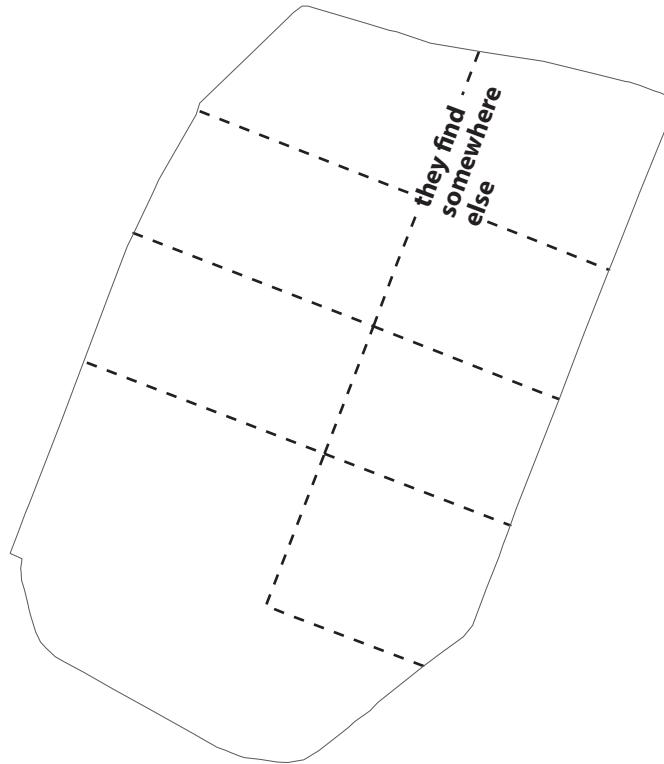
# Hannah

Zaatari camp districts

There's what they call the "Old Camp" which is like five districts that have been there the longest and so **those are definitely more stable**. Populations don't really fluctuate, you know? People don't really go in and out as much of those districts because they are more permanent.

Hannah described the camp's 12 districts. Each district is supported by several amenities such as kitchens, water stations, mosques, and schools.



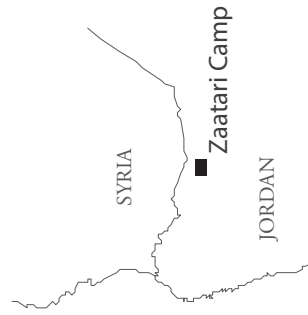
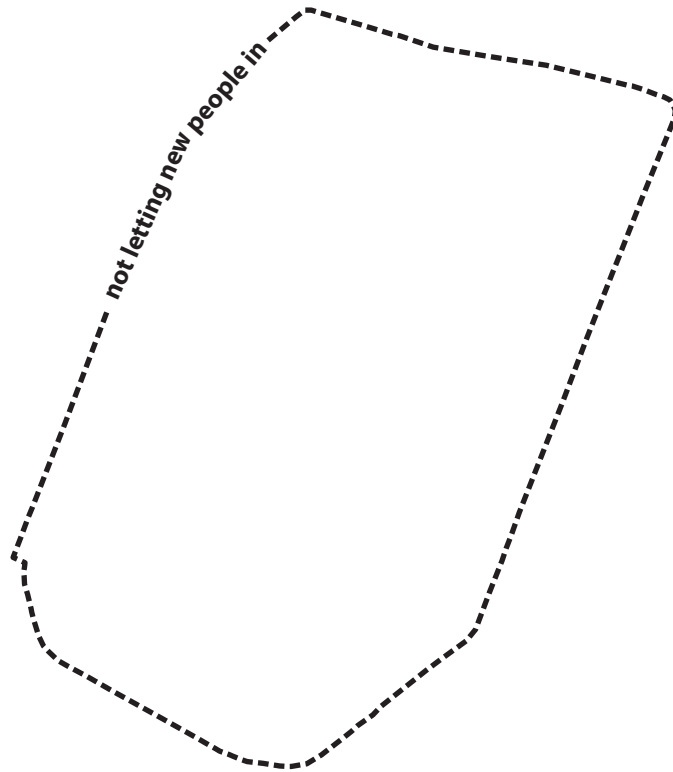


**Hannah**



*Zaatari camp districts*

But the newer districts... When people first arrive, they're usually assigned to one district and then they probably stay there for a bit and then if **they find somewhere else** that's closer to family or friends then they would move to another district.

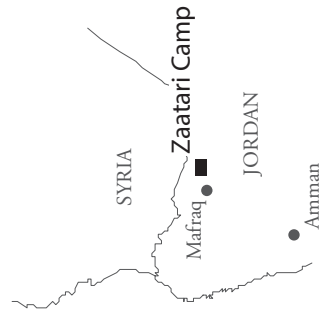
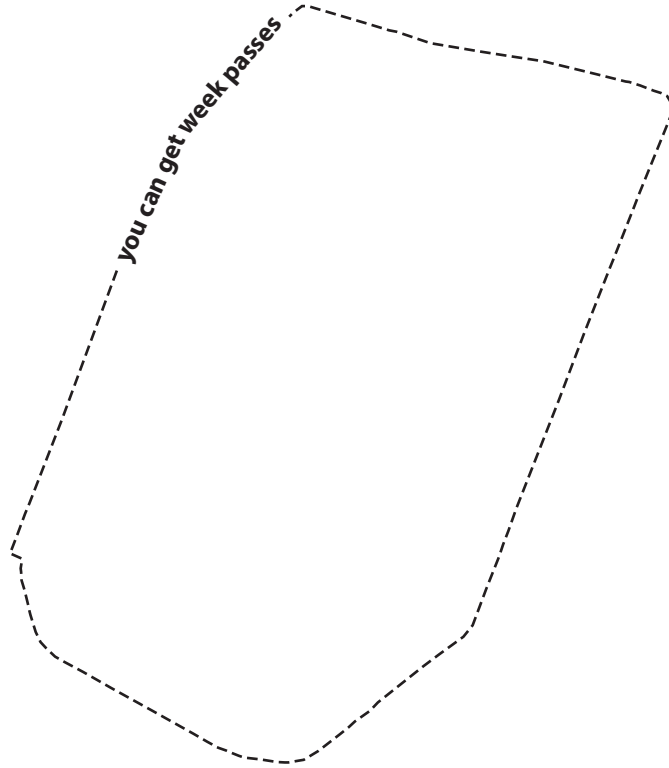


Hannah

*Zaatari refugee camp*

I don't know if it's at capacity but the authorities are not really taking on, you know, **not letting as many new people in**. Basically, you can get into Zaatari if you have like maybe family members that live there so you can, you know, family reunification. And also, war wounded people...

She noted changes the number of refugees allowed into the camp.

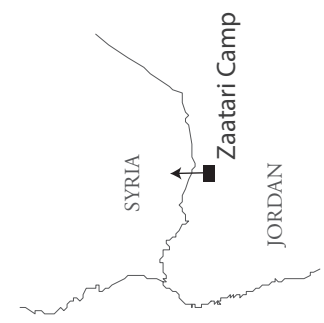
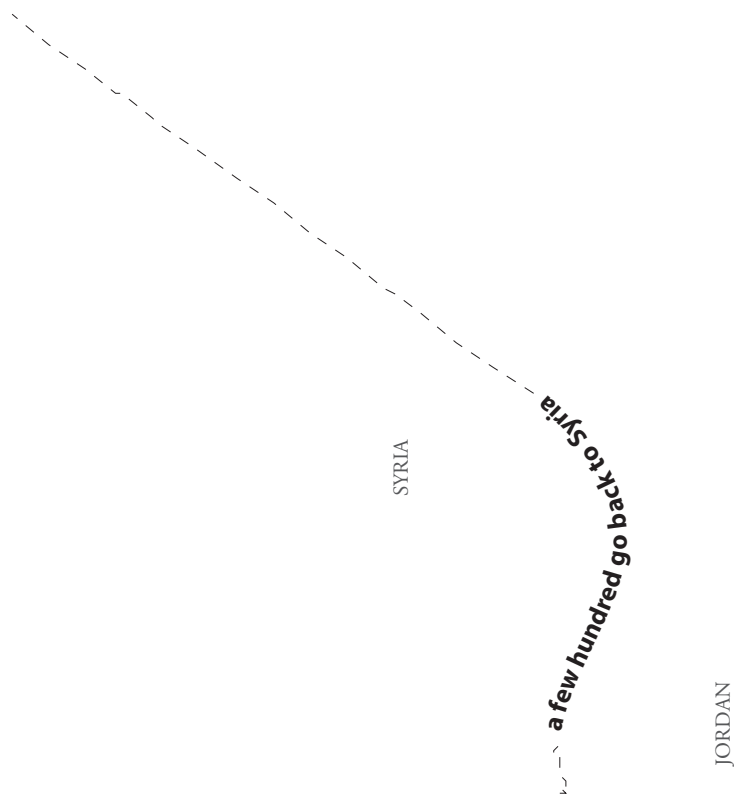


**Hannah**

*Zaatari refugee camp*

People are also leaving the camp... quite frequently. **You can get day or week passes** to go out of the camp and then come back... There's definitely smuggling of... mostly of like items that are distributed within the camp and then taken out of the camp and sold for money...

In addition to inward flows, Hannah also mentioned flows out of the camp.

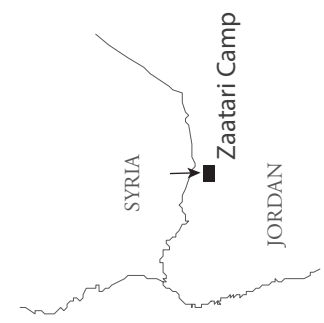
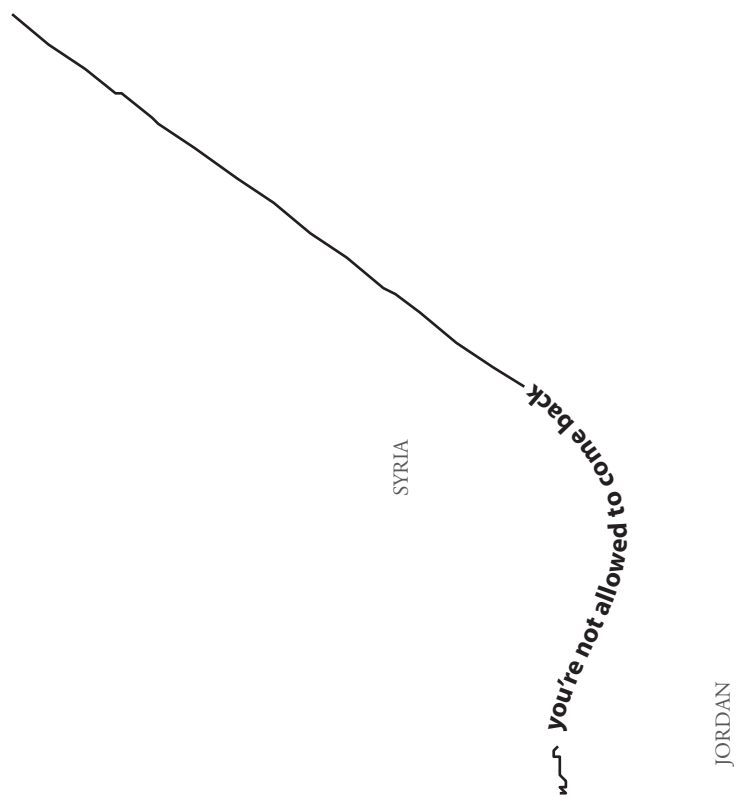


**Hannah**

Syrian-Jordanian

She continued that many even leave the camp and return to Syria.

**A few hundred go back to Syria every week.** At least there were...

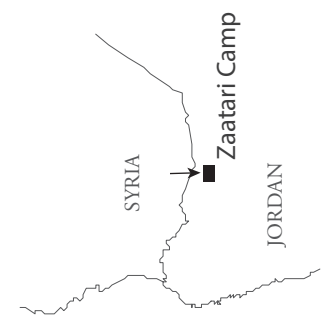
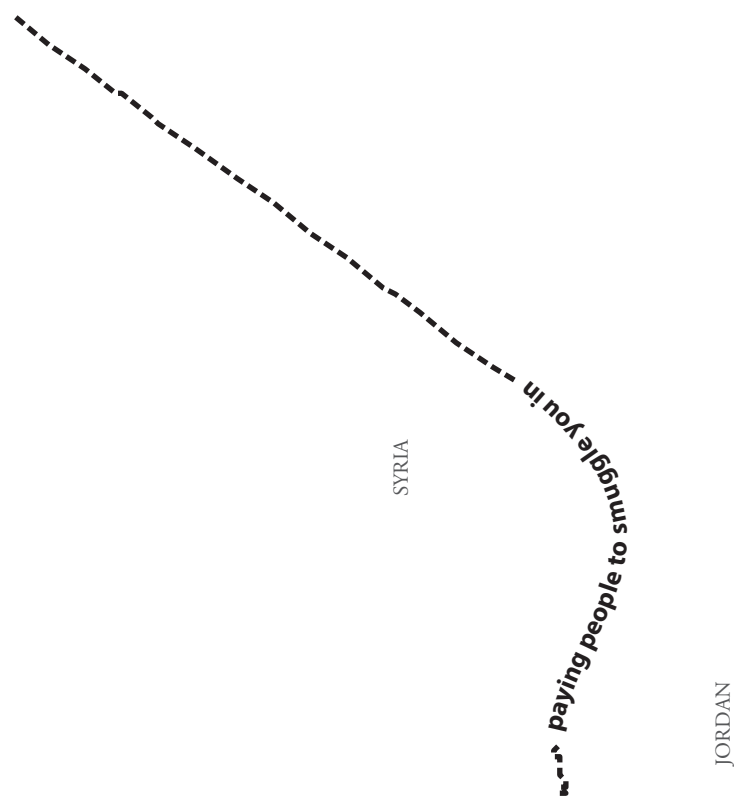


**Hannah**



Technically the rule is, that once you go back, once you've been in Jordan and you go back to Syria, **you're not allowed to come back to Jordan...**

Hannah expanded on the rules of crossing the border.

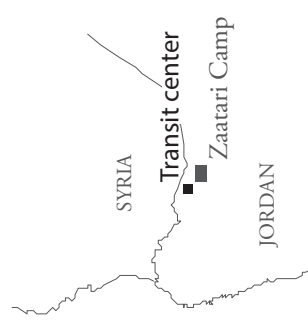
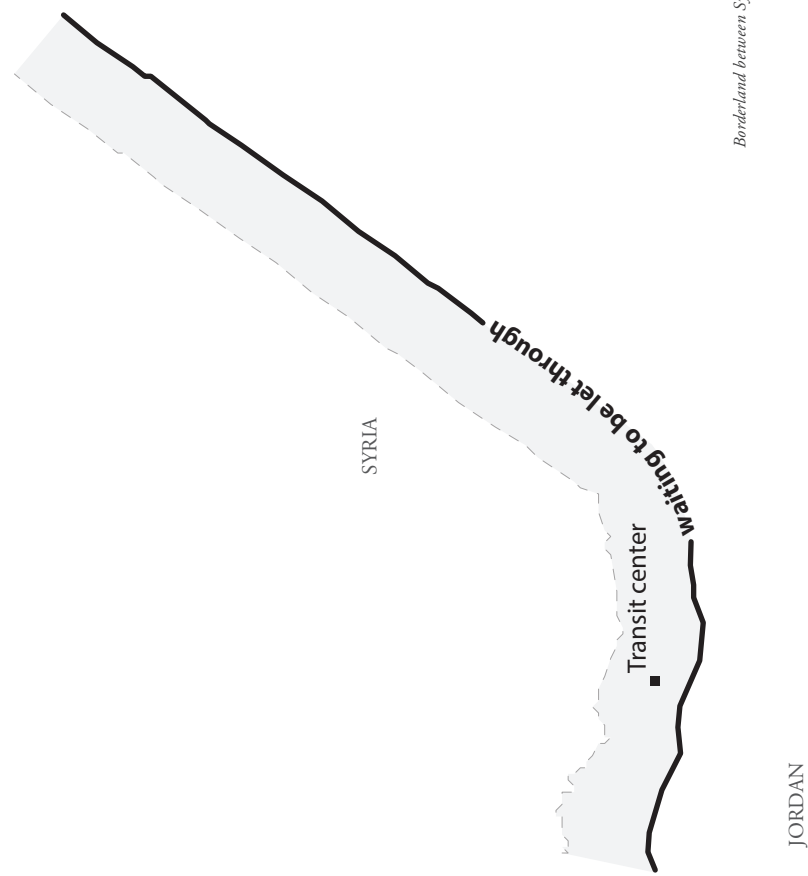


Hannah

JORDAN

Syrian-Jordanian

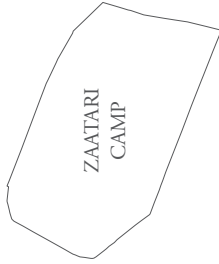
Hannah discussed how Syrians continue to cross the international border. However, some people manage to do it through whatever means. **Paying people to smuggle you in** or cross the border...



Hannah

People, anyone coming into Jordan goes through the transit center right at the border... I don't know much about it but I've heard it's, yeah... I mean there's not much there. Like, there's no housing for people, yet people have spent several nights there in some instances **waiting to be let through** sort of thing. So...

perceived safety  
can go a long way



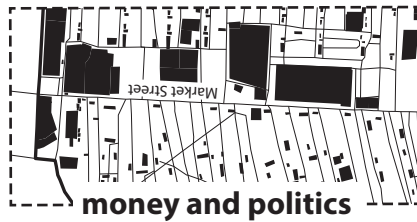
## Hannah

*The home, caravan*

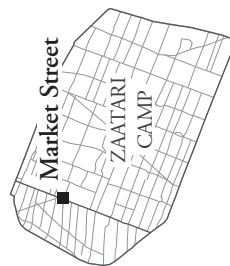
Having a caravan is definitely more secure. You can lock it from the inside... I think **perceived safety can go a long way**... I think, generally, people will feel safer in closer proximity to their household because most people are situated living around family and people that they know... they're not alone

I asked Hannah about safety and the home.





money and politics



## Hannah

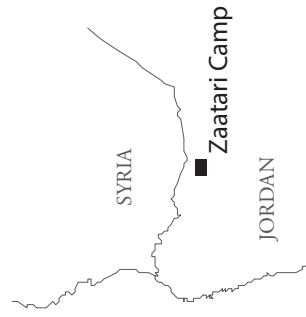
*Informal economy on Market Street*

There's two really big market streets... There are tailors, welders, bicycle repair shops, arcades... There is sort of like this informal real estate market... It's probably not an option for everyone. You need to have the **money** upfront to be able to afford it, to open up shop... I'm sure there's **politics** of who's allowed where and that sort of thing, I'm sure it's very complex...

Hannah hypothesized that jobs within the camp are extensive but dependent on several factors, including money and politics.

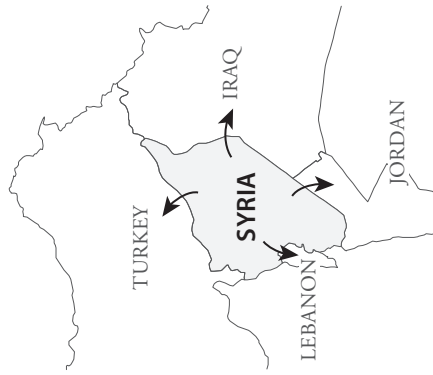
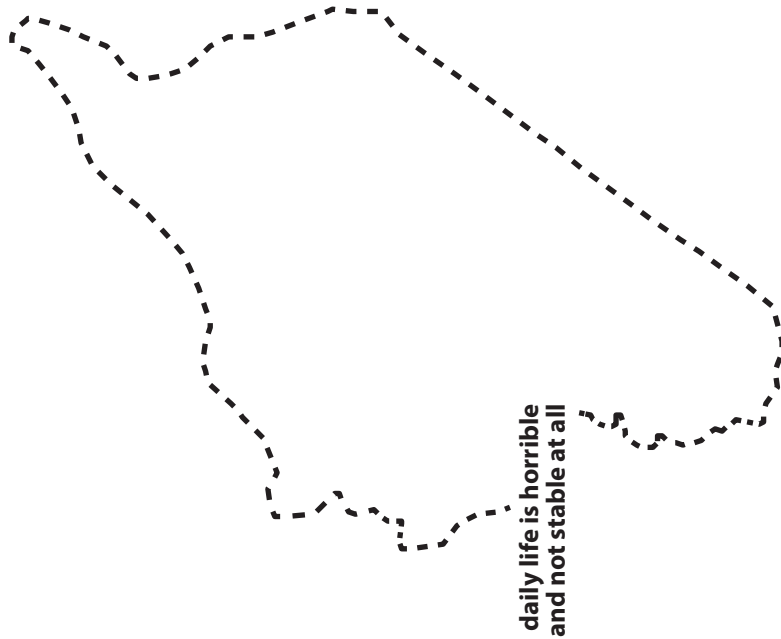
Individual Maps

**Fateh and Baraq Contextual**



## Fateh and Baraq

Fateh and Baraq are Jordanian humanitarian aid workers. They work in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. Together, they provide insight into various borders faced by Syrian refugees, before, during, and after arrival in Jordan.

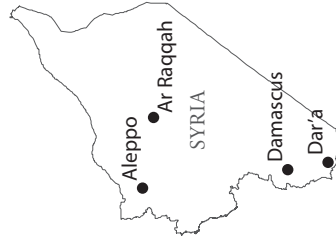
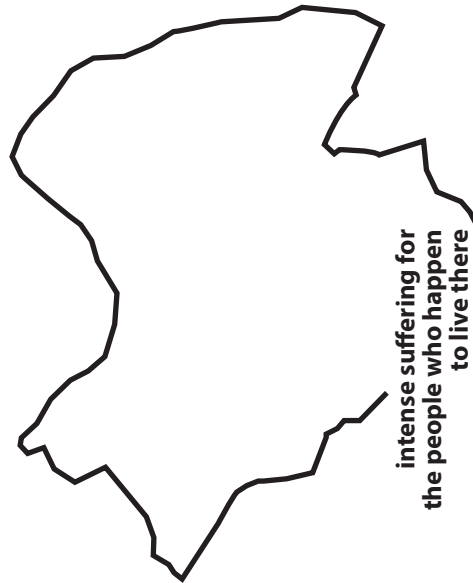


## Fateh and Baraq



Syria

Daily life in Syria is horrible and not stable at all... there is conflict and shelling by airstrike... prices of food... are increased, the service is going down... there is a lack of food, medicine, water... All of these things affect their life and force them to leave... heading to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq...

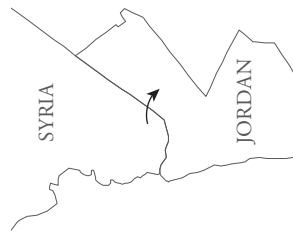


## Fateh and Baraq

*Controlled cities*

Villages, cities which are under the seige by the regime cause an **intense suffering for the people who happen to live there**. There is significant shortage in basic human needs such as food, water, shelter...

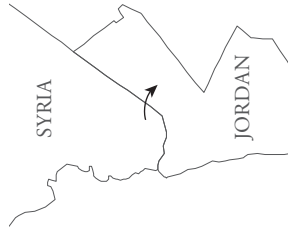
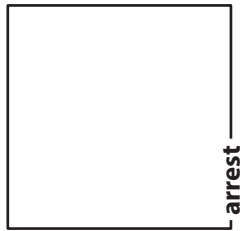
Syrians face checkpoints



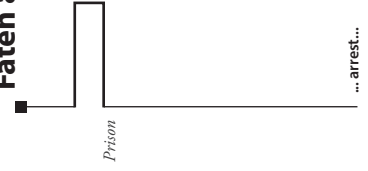
Fateh and Baraq



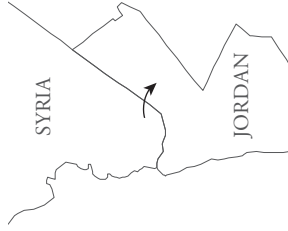
Fateh and Baraq discussed several barriers encountered by Syrians.  
Most difficulties and constraints the Syrians face before leaving are, the checkpoints...



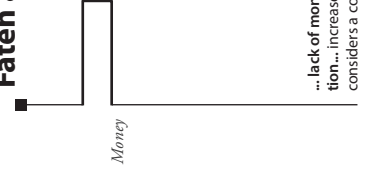
## Fateh and Baraq



Syrians face lack of money to pay for transportation

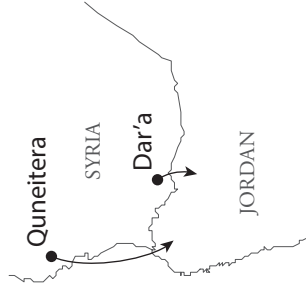
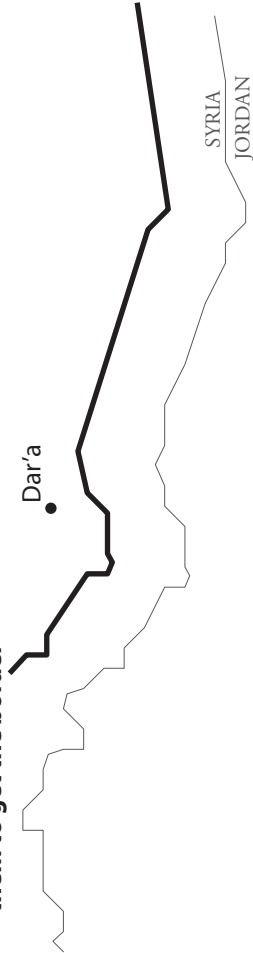


## Fateh and Baraq





armed groups prevent them to get the border



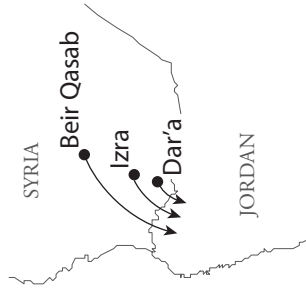
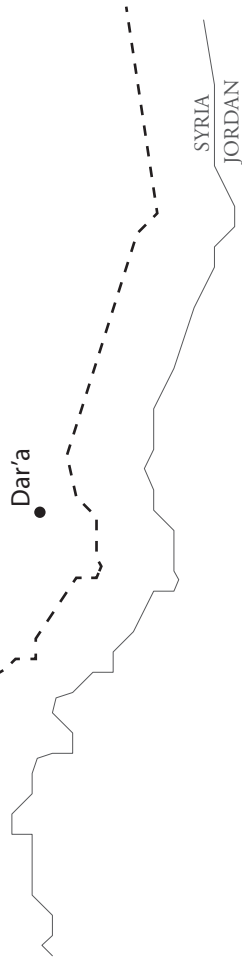
## Fateh and Baraq

*Extremist groups*

Armed groups as well consider a barrier for the Syrian, and prevent them to get to the border...Between the Syrian villages (Dar'a and Quneitara) and Jordan borders... there are extremist groups on that villages.

People, actors in the conflict affect the movement of Syrians.

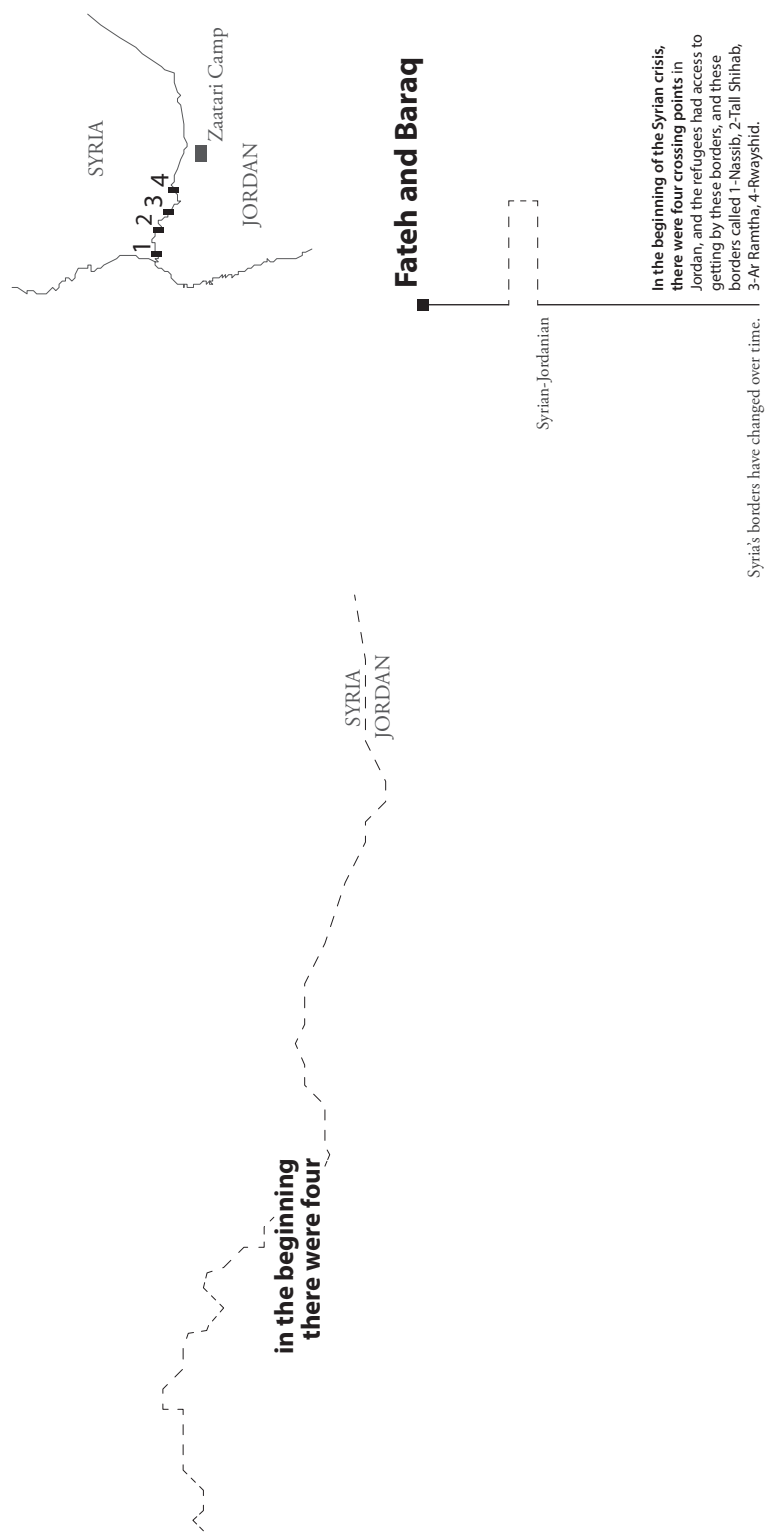
most do not have  
money to pay, so they  
can't get to Jordan



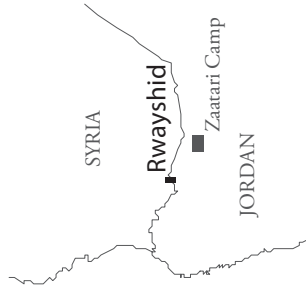
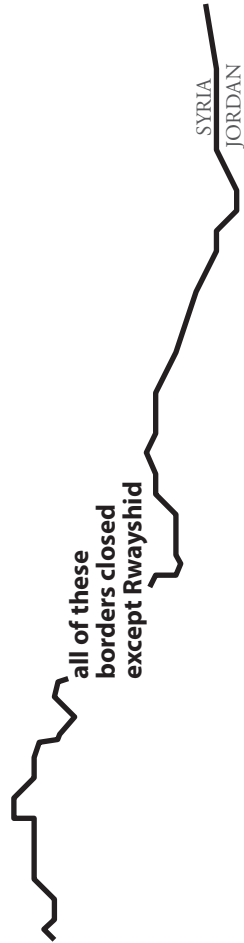
## Fateh and Baraq

*Beduin clans*

Villages from Dar'a-Izra'to the Beir Qasab in the south way in Syria are controlled by the Beduin Clans, and that considers a barrier for the civilians because they have to pay for them and **most of the civilians do not have money to pay, so at the results they can't get to Jordan.**



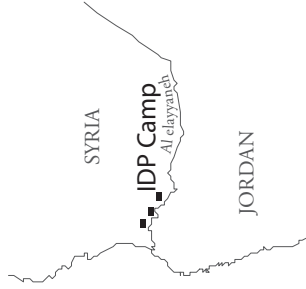
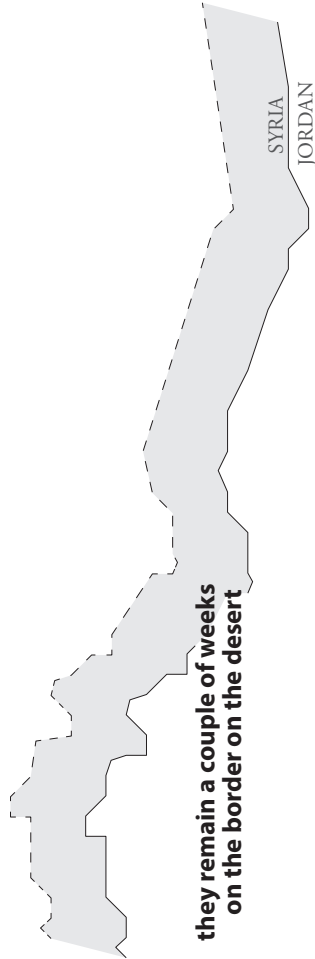
in the beginning  
there were four



## Fateh and Baraq

Syrian-Jordanian

But in the beginning of 2014, **all of these borders are closed except Rwayshid** border and that is because of Jordanian government decision, and this decision affected on decrease the number of refugees, and the security issues affect on decrease the number as well.

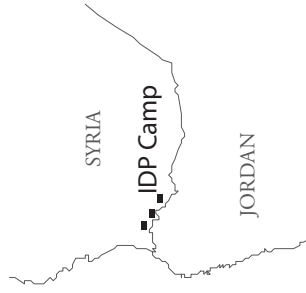
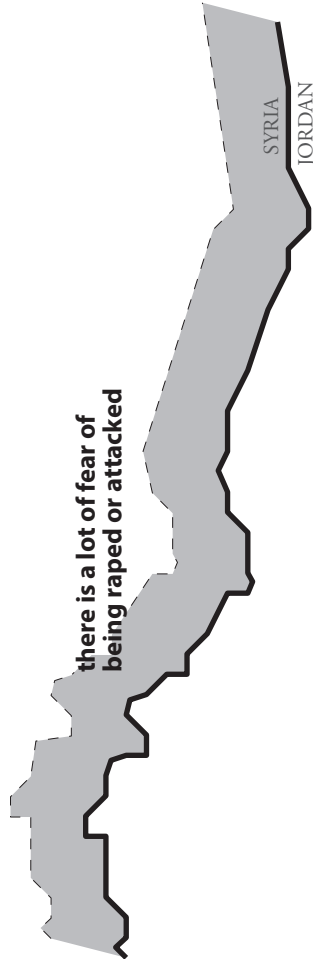


## Fateh and Baraq

*Syrian-Jordanian borderland*

Several months ago, there were like 5000 refugee on the border waiting for the Jordan government approval to give them the permission to enter Jordan, so **they remain a couple of weeks on the border...** the Jordanian army and UNHCR distributed the food, water and shelter during that time... they spent some days on the desert in area called Al elayyaneh...

For those that reach the border, Fateh and Baraq described the border as space, not a line.



## Fateh and Baraq

*Syrian-Jordanian borderland*



Its worth to mention that generally civilians at the camp don't feel secure enough staying in the desert area. **There is a lot of fear of being raped or attacked** by mobs that do exist nearby... destabilizing the situation by terrifying innocent women and children.

they waited for  
three days

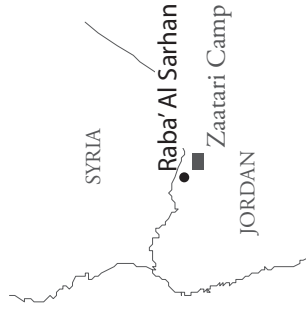


Fateh and Baraq

Raba' Al Sarhan, reception center

After they cross the Jordan point (Rwayshid), the Jordan army guide them to a place called Raba' Al Sarhan... **they waited for 3 days**

they do an eye  
contact and  
register as a  
refugee

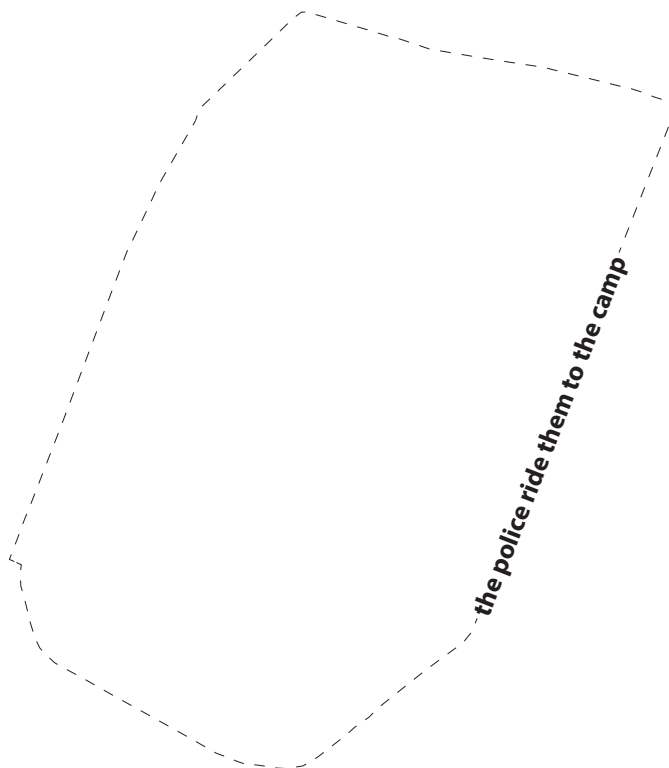


## Fateh and Baraq

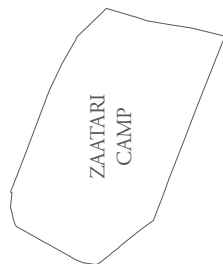
*The body*

There, they do the eye contact (eye print) and register as a refugee then they receive the UNCHR card





*the police ride them to the camp*

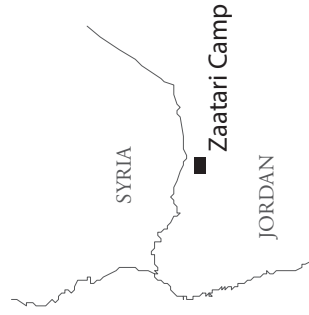
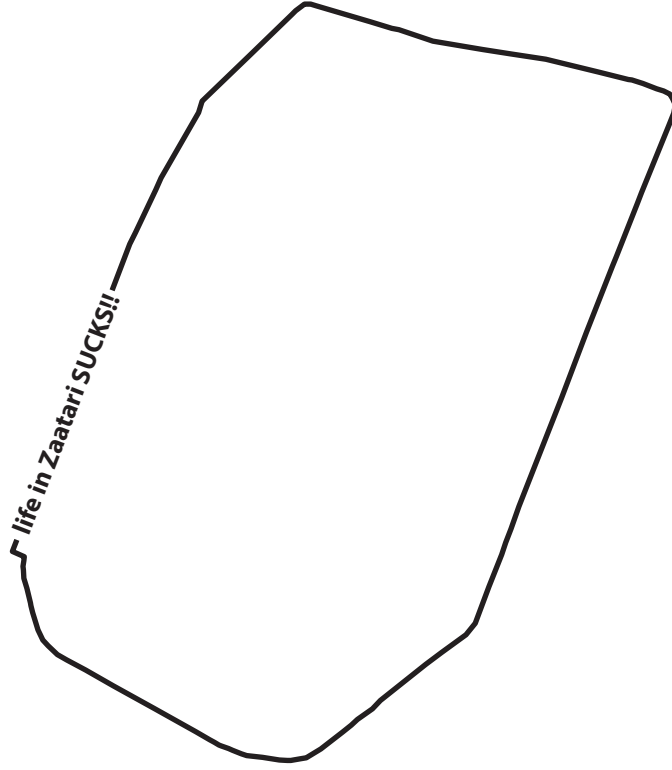


ZAAATARI  
CAMP

## Fateh and Baraq

*Zaatari refugee camp*

After these process, **the police ride them to the camp** by the police bus, and in the camp they get the tent...

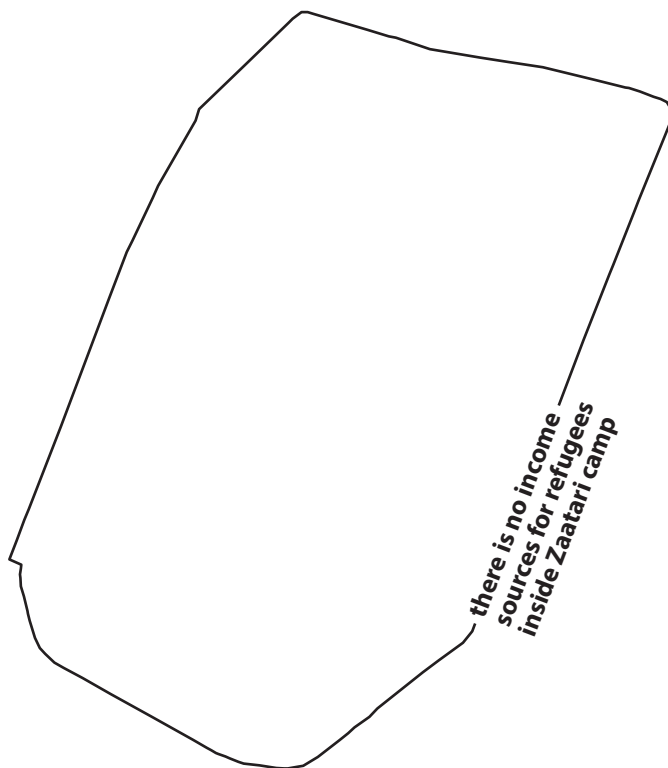


## Fateh and Baraq

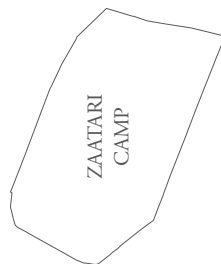
*Zaatari refugee camp*

**Life in Zaatari SUCKS!!** And for sure difficulties are much more than opportunities. Refugees live in tents and caravans which are being extremely hot during summer days and very cold and unsafe during the cold weather..

I asked Fateh and Baraq to describe life in the camp in one word.



**there is no income  
sources for refugees  
inside Zaatari camp**



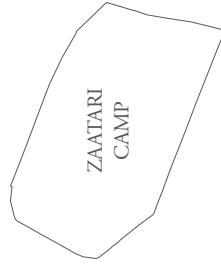
**ZAATARI  
CAMP**

## **Fateh and Baraq**

*Zaatari refugee camp*

**There is no income sources for refugees inside Zaatari camp but the voucher's they receive and working with NGO's inside the camp or self-employment...**

They expanded further



## Fateh and Baraq

It's a refugee camp in desert you are free to imagine the situation.

Individual Maps  
**Amal Personal**

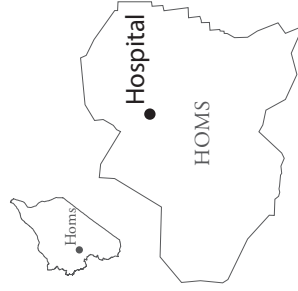


## Amal

When the Syrian revolution erupted in March 2011, I was holding a teaching position in Aleppo School of Medicine, and preparing for a PhD advance degree in histopathology. My previous experience with the Syrian regime's brutality prevented me initially from direct involvement in the revolution.

Amal is a Syrian doctor displaced in Turkey. His wife and daughter are separated in Egypt.

people did not  
trust hospitals



Amal

Hospital

After the famous "Central Square" massacre, in my own city Homs, I found myself obligated to help the civilians and work secretly in local field hospitals. **People did not trust going to the governmental hospitals** fearing of arrest, torture, and even execution.

she could not  
stop crying

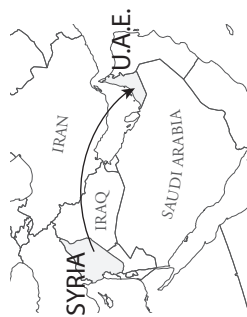
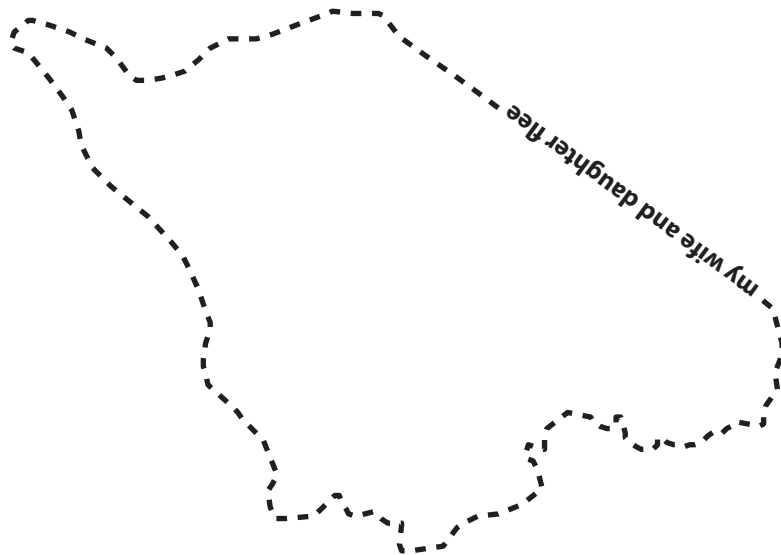


Amal

*Amal's home*

I continued to work secretly, while the situation continued to get worse... My wife, who is physician too, had quit her laboratory specialty training, and my daughter, who was only two and half years old, could not stop crying every time she heard a shooting or a bomb near our home...

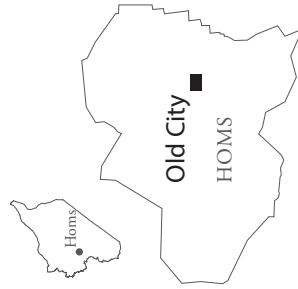
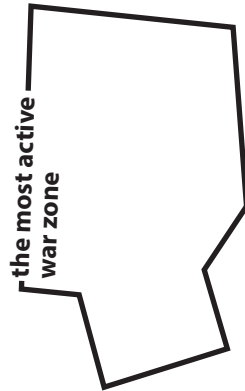




Amal

Syria and United Arab Emirates

For those reasons and others, I had to make  
**my wife and daughter flee the country**  
toward UAE in May 2013.



Amal

Old City, Homs

Eventually, the government managed to have a total siege over the Old City, which was the **most active war zone** then. I was no longer able to help over there.

I was unable to  
move in and out  
easily



Amal

Amal's district

In fact, my own district was under a  
sub-total siege and I was unable to  
move in and out easily.



## Amal

*Borderland between  
Shabiha and rebels*

I had to treat both sides of the war, the rebels and the Shabiha. My medical ethics and humanitarian side forced me to do so... While medically helping both sides of the war felt the right thing to do, this very issue placed additional pressure on me. Not only I had to avoid disclosing my role in helping the rebels from the government, but also I had to face increasing scrutiny from the rebels because of my help to the other side...

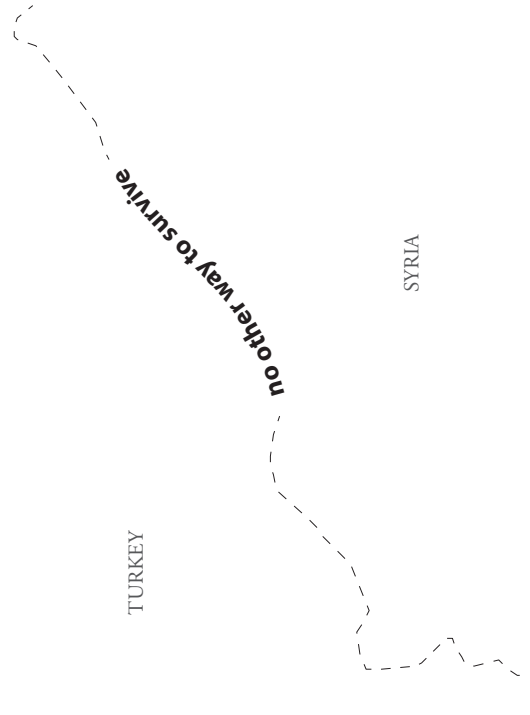
I was physically hurt in one incidence



Amal

Amal's body

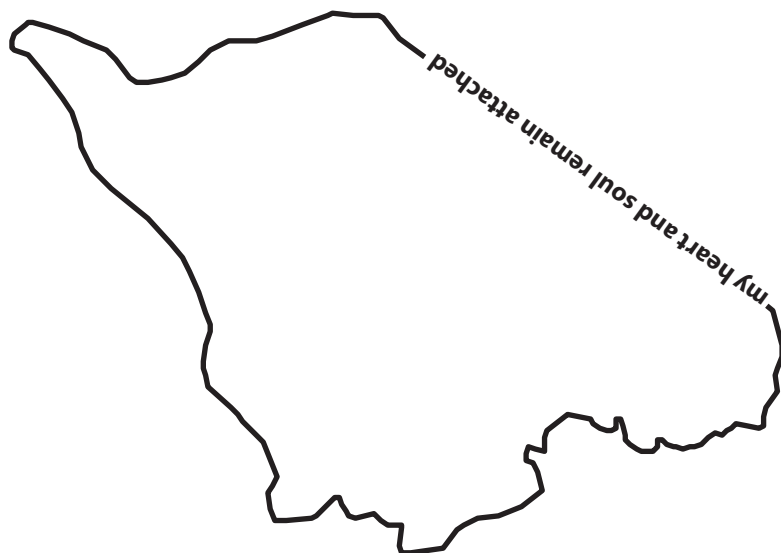
I received multiple threat letters, not only concerning myself, but also concerning my parents and my siblings. In fact, I was physically hurt in one incident.



**Amal**

Syrian-Turkish

Eventually, the pressure piled so high on me, I had **no other way to survive except running away**, and so I did. I secretly managed to travel to Turkey... where I continued to work in humanitarian aid to my own people.



**Amal**

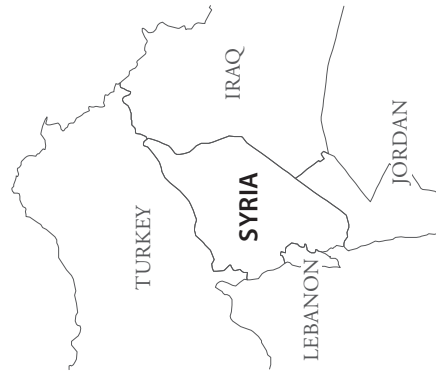
Syria

Although I physically moved out of the country, but **my heart and soul remain attached** there, where I have the rest of my family suffering the daily bombardment and shooting from the Syrian government.

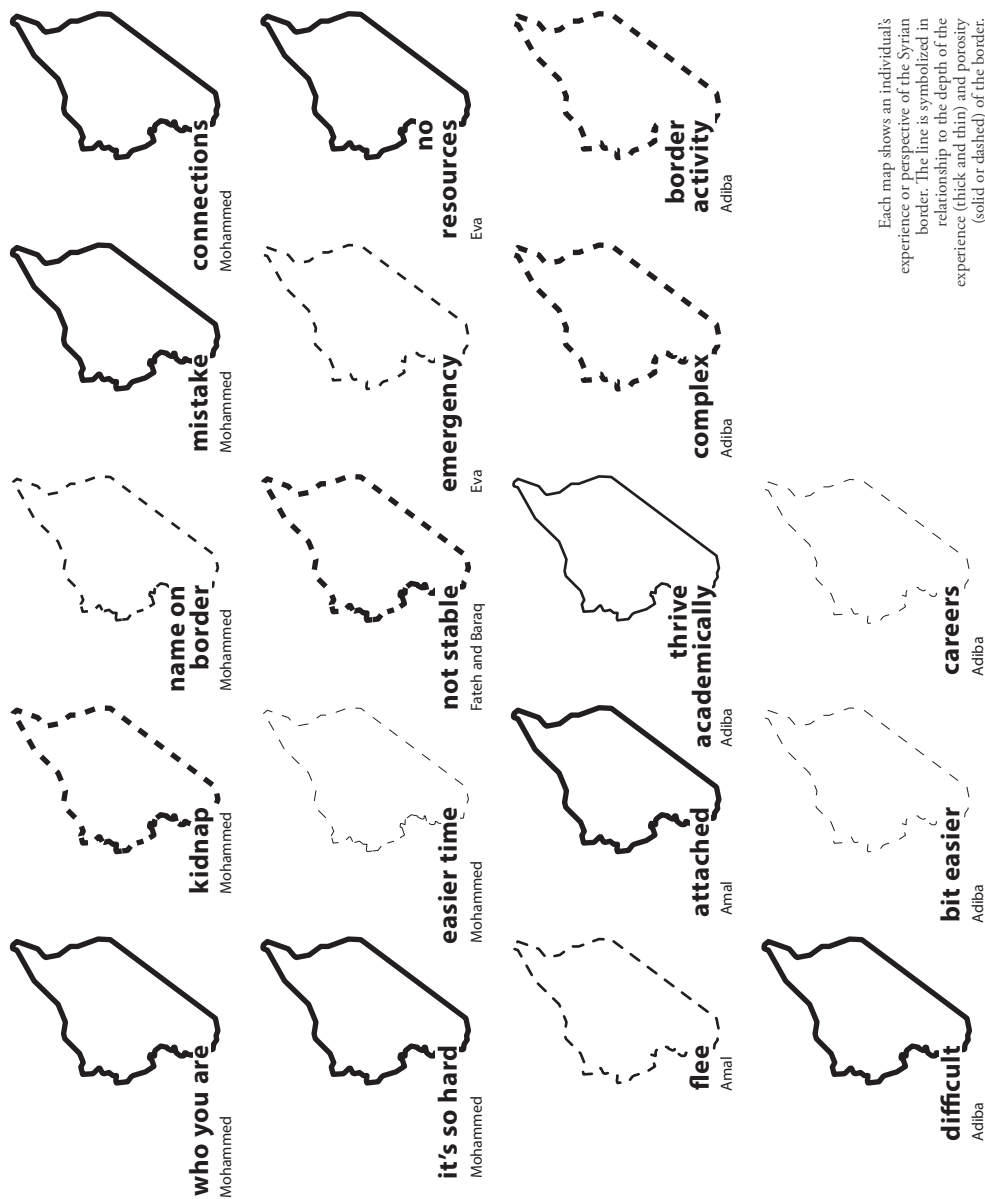
**Appendix E: Aggregated maps**



## Aggregated map



UNHCR calls the Syrian crisis “the biggest humanitarian disaster of our era.” Borders — traditional and *non-traditional* — are central to the crisis itself. The maps presented here represent seven individuals and their border stories. With symbolization and labeling, the composite map layouts illuminate the various border experiences discussed in the interviews. The second, smaller scale map aggregates these experiences by taking the median symbolization based on size and arrangement (gap) from the composite maps. Each aggregated map is labeled in my voice.





## Interviewees



Syria  
size 2.00  
gap 2

The Syrian border is experienced in many ways. Some cross with relative ease, while thousands wait in the borderland between chaos and safety. Young men are viewed as security risks and are often declined. Humanitarian workers rely on this border to deliver aid to the millions of displaced individuals. The border is dynamic, changing over time and between experiences. This line also embodies identity, home, and regret.



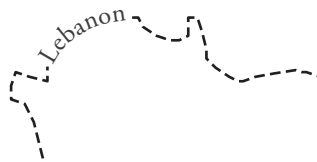
Each map shows one experience or perspective of the Syrian-Jordanian border. In addition to symbolization, the line is labeled with a direct quote from the individual's story. This label provides context for the line's symbolization.

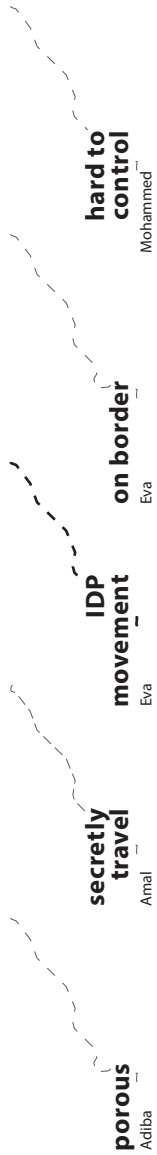


## Interviewees

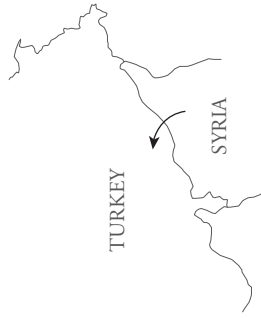
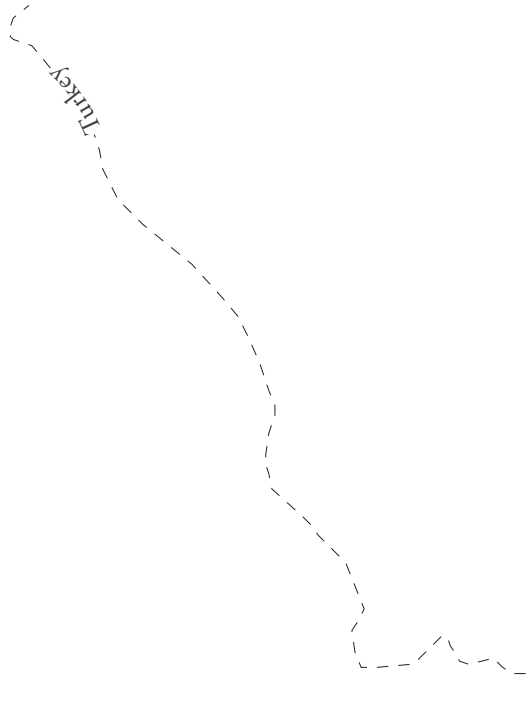
Syrian-Lebanese  
size 1.00  
gap 2

The Syrian-Lebanese border is described as the most dangerous border. Geopolitical tension remains between the two countries as fleeing Syrians trek through the treacherous terrain to reach the border. Checkpoints and villages under siege result in hostility and violence making this route a mine field.





These maps show experiences or perspectives of the Syrian-Turkish border. The name of the individual describing the border is written by each map to connect the map viewer to the individual's experience.

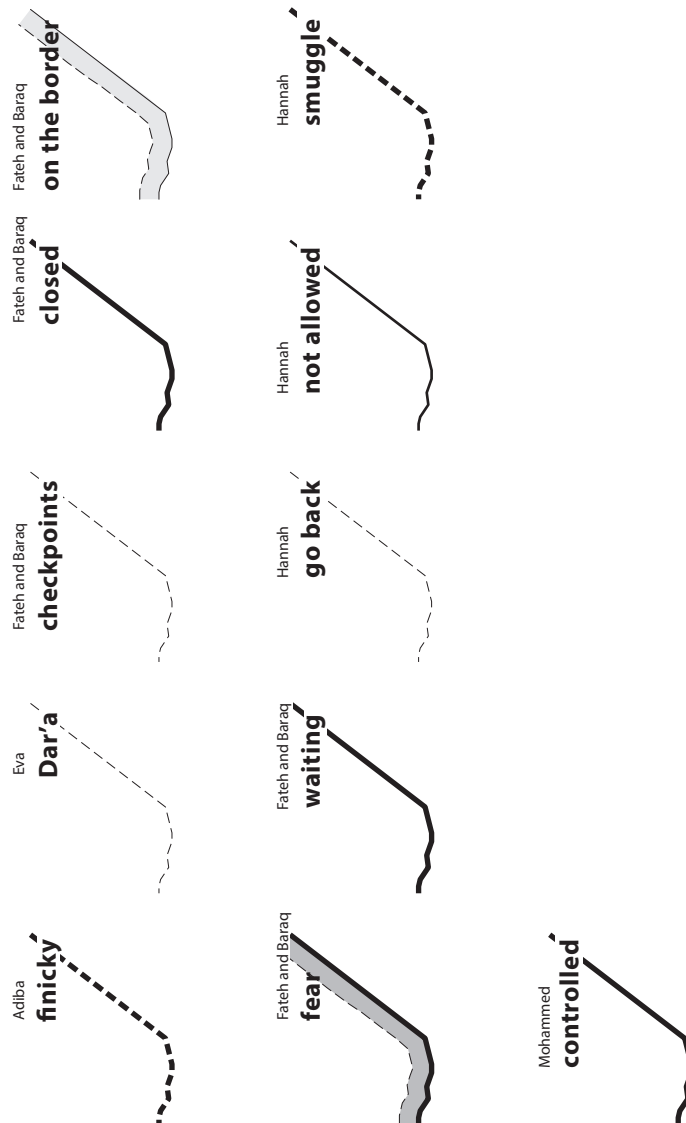


## Interviewees

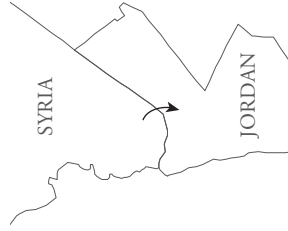
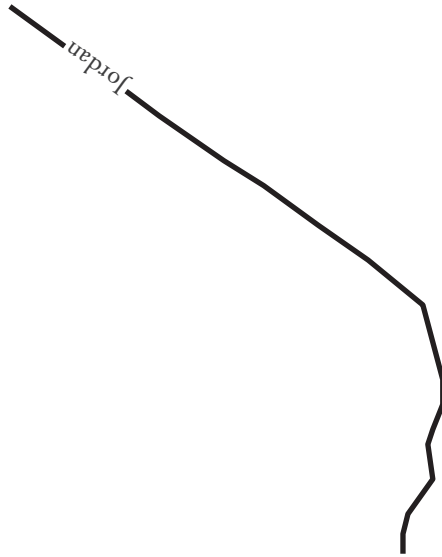
Syrian-Turkish  
size 0.25  
gap 4

The Turkish border is the most open border, at least for the time being. The border has extensive length, which makes it difficult to control as thousands cross legally and illegally. Although Turkey has been a gracious host, Turkey may be nearing its capacity to take on more refugees. This thin, porous border continues to evolve.





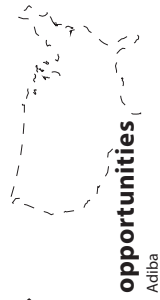
Each map shows the Syrian-Jordanian border through the lens of one interviewee. Most of the borders were described as lines, but two interviewees described the border as an area, a bordeland. In areas, changes in value show depth of experience.



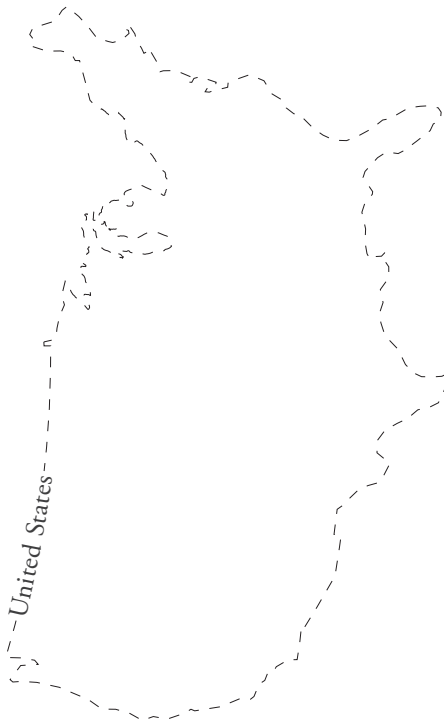
## Interviewees

Syrian-Jordanian  
size 2.00  
gap 0

The Jordanian border has fluctuated over time. The border was relatively open at the beginning of the crisis. Now, many border crossings have closed due to overcapacity. Thousands wait in borderland camps. Others rely on smuggling across. The return trip from Jordan to Syria, however, is much easier.



These maps show Adiba's three perspectives of the United States border. Although each border appears geographically identical, the changing symbolization shows her differing perspectives of the same border and line.



## Interviewee

United States  
size 0.25  
gap 4

Adiba's family, particularly her uncle, has encountered the US border in several ways. Although her uncle's occupation as a doctor opened opportunities, this same border separates him from his children in Egypt. He hasn't seen his children in two years.

**get killed**  
Mohammed

**unable to  
move**  
Amal

**total seige**  
Amal

**write your  
name down**  
Eva

**cut off**  
Eva

**controlled  
roads**  
Eva

**intense  
suffering**  
Fateh and Baraq

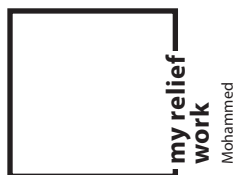
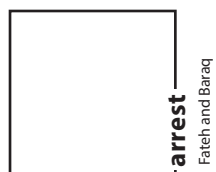
Each map shows one individual's description of controlled areas. Controlled areas are non-traditional borders that frequently lack a precise location. As such, many are not mapped. These squares map these undefined spaces.



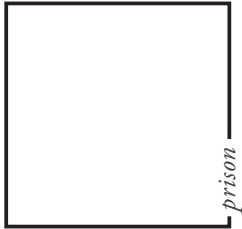
## Interviewees

Controlled areas  
size 2.00  
gap 0

Areas controlled by the regime and opposition groups (cities, districts, checkpoints, roads) are heavily reinforced. They are experienced, dangerous, and prominent across the Syrian landscape. Mobility is restricted and threatened in many of these areas.



Each map shows a prison as an abstract, non-traditional border. The border fluctuates as Mohammed is arrested and released twice as seen in the latter four maps.



prison



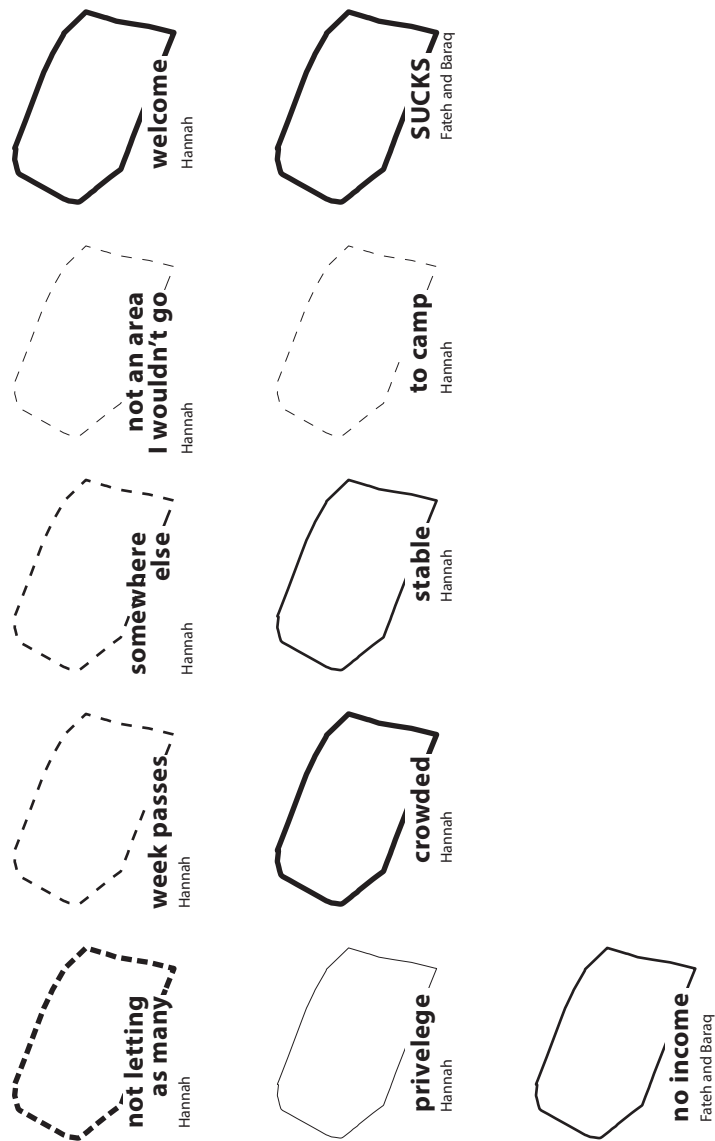
## Interviewees



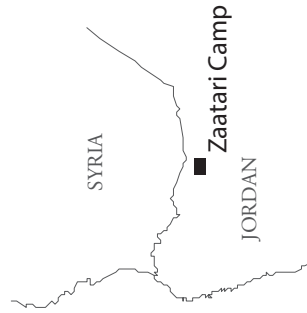
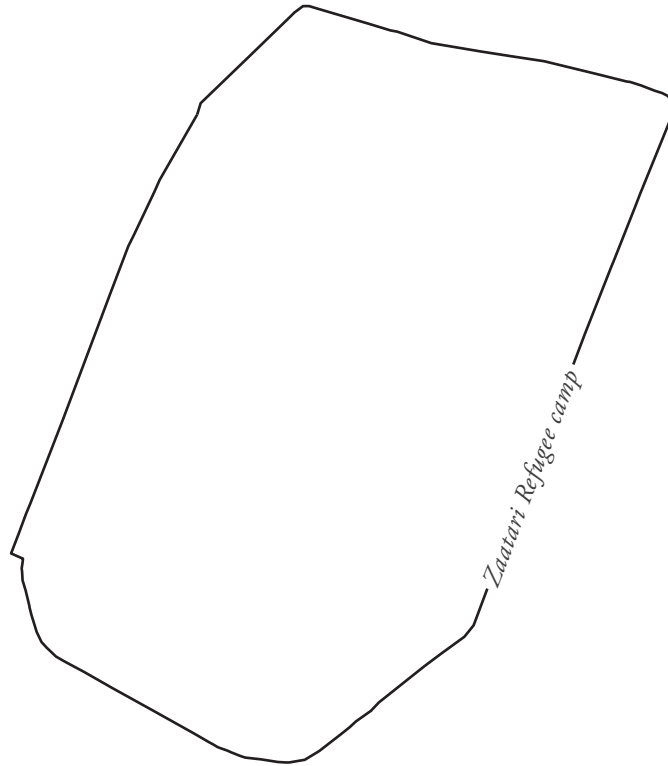
Prison  
size 1.00  
gap 0

Many fear arrest and torture when attempting to leave the country. The prisons are bordered with walls and security preventing the movement of individuals. This border changes based on money, power, and connections.





Each map shows one individual's experience or description of Zaatari refugee camp, a non-traditional border for many Syrian refugees that leave the country.



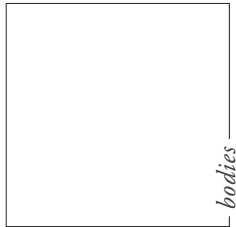
## Interviewees

*Zaatari Refugee Camp*  
size 1.00  
gap 0

Women in particular, feel unsafe in certain areas of the camp such as crowded areas away from the home. The conditions in the camp are unbearable for many living in the tent and caravan city of 80,000+ people and no income.



Each map shows the body as a bordered space based on one individual's experience or perspective.



bodies



## Interviewees

The Body  
size 0.25  
gap 0

The body is the most intimate border experienced. The border and personal sovereignty changes through experiences (physical harm), perspectives (outsider), and feelings (trust or fear).